

International Relations and Area Studies: Focus on Western Balkans

Editori:
Laura Herța și Adrian Corpădean

Presa Universitară Clujeană

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND AREA STUDIES:
FOCUS ON WESTERN BALKANS

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WHY THE WESTERN BALKANS SHOULD MATTER FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

Laura M. Herța, Adrian G. Corpădean

The enlargement policy of the European Union is arguably one of the most impactful from a variety of standpoints, including that of perceptions of the appeal that the unification project has always been in dire need of. Apart from this, enlargement has constantly prompted prominent change in the functioning of the decision-making processes of the Community/Union, which inherently turns more intricate proportionally to the number of members that join the club. Without a doubt, the most spectacular episode in the history of this policy occurred in 2004, when the symbolic and inherently political gesture of opening the doors of what had often been ironically referred to as "fortress Europe" were slammed open to no fewer than 10 East-Central countries, with more waiting in line.[1] Whether this event happened ahead of its time or was a logical reparatory action remains the topic of heated debates in the literature, with notable variations between more complacent attitudes from countries that have made a point of encouraging the openness of the EU, and openly hostile views on the part of those that have been critical of the consequences and price to pay (sometimes literally) of the broadest enlargement wave to date.

The Brexit-struck and illiberally-challenged EU should nevertheless remain appealing to its neighbours, and a gauge thereof lies in its capacity to exert what is often called its normative power in the rather unstable neighbourhood, i.e. from the Western Balkans to the North-East and the Caucasus. Such terminology as "normative power Europe" and the very use of the phrase "Western Balkans" are, however, somewhat controversial and risk being endowed with connotations that are not constructive to the extent that they coincide with a false description of a type of mimicry that should characterise the relations between the EU and the aspiring member states. Instead, the negotiators of the Union are required to exhibit awareness of the specific development patterns of a region that has

[1] See Eli Gateva, *European Union Enlargement Conditionality*, Springer, 2016.

positioned itself onto a democratic path by paying the price of war and in whose case the time elapsed since the establishment of democratic statehood has been, historically speaking, remarkably short.

Since 1993, the legal framework of the accession process in terms of eligibility, or the basic conditions that have to be met, has revolved around the Copenhagen criteria – a set of immutable principles that begin in the realm of common sense for the democratic world and encompass a more technical and even intricate approach to economic and technical, or administrative measures taken in keeping with the community acquis. The checklist includes the respect for human rights, notably those of national minorities, and the implementation of the rule of law, from a political standpoint, and the status of a functional market economy, combined with the transposition of the heavy body of legislation needed for complying with the EU's policy management. As the competences of the EU and its amount of regulatory documentation increase, so too do the requirements of the negotiations chapters, no fewer than 35 at present.[2]

Moreover, as the European Commission acquires more technical expertise, which it undoubtedly did after leading the negotiations of East-Central European states, the candidate countries need to adapt with the type of technical know-how that is backed by solid political support. If the position of commissioner for enlargement is often regarded as politicized, much like the chief-negotiator roles attributed by the candidate countries, the same does not hold true of the team of experts that delve into the minutia of some of the most sensitive negotiation chapters. The Western Balkans are, indeed, faced with specific challenges stemming from the heavy inheritance of past totalitarianism and ethnic conflict, which make, for instance, chapters 23 and 24 particularly sensitive. Endemic corruption, organized crime, political instability, incomplete or downright counterproductive reform attempts in their justice systems, corroborated with poor retention strategies of highly-qualified staff and the tendency of

[2] Communication de la Commission au Parlement européen, au Conseil, au Comité économique et social européen et au Comité des régions. 2018. Une perspective d'élargissement crédible ainsi qu'un engagement de l'Union européenne renforcé pour les Balkans occidentaux, Bruxelles, COM/2018/065 final.

governments to exert control over mass media, they all paint a bleak picture of an essential transformative endeavour.[3]

From an economic viewpoint, the size of the markets of the candidate states from the Western Balkans is overall quite small and would not dramatically alter the balance of the single market, with Serbia topping the list given its population of almost 7 million and $ 53 billion GDP.[4] Peculiar cases have arisen, nevertheless, with Montenegro's unilateral – albeit historically understandable – adoption of the euro as its official currency, with no right of emission.[5] Albeit having a smaller-sized economy normally accounts for quicker compliance with the relevant chapters of the acquis, the precedent of meeting both the Maastricht and Copenhagen criteria upon hypothetical accession has yet to materialize itself.

Perhaps the best and most unbiased way of assessing the progress of the candidate countries on the way to accession is by examining the annual progress reports drafted by the EU Commission. This fills a lot of pages in the current literature and may be corroborated with the reputable negotiation style that Brussels has sought to portray, but several limitations should be put forward. Among these, one cannot help but notice that the range of terminology used for grading and forecasting technical progress has pretty much remained unchanged, and regrettably so, from the time when East-Central Europe was slowly making its way for the EU, amid its transition and post-transition phases. For a political scientist or integration expert to go over the mostly arid text of the reports, it often means experiencing a craving for concrete remarks, let alone solutions, hidden beyond the "some", "moderate" or "good" levels of preparedness that are used as too general a gauge for subjects of paramount complexity. That said, while the inability to move away from the rather insipid language formulas and the occasional strategic ambiguity are to be held against the annual progress reports, we do not dispute the usefulness of such documents and especially of the monitoring process that goes on behind

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[3] Åse B. Grødeland, "Public Perceptions of Corruption and Anti-Corruption Reform in the Western Balkans", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 91, No. 3 (July 2013), pp. 535-598.

[4] World Bank data for 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/serbia/overview#1, last access 8 December 2021.

[5] Altin Ilirjani, *The Euro Before the EU?: An Estimate of the Economic Effects of Euroization in the Western Balkans*, Globic Press, 2006, p. 103.

the scenes, prompting reform and reaching priorities that would otherwise be drifting away from the public eye. From the freedom of expression of journalists to the rights of children in the orphanage system, many benefits have accrued over time from these procedures set in place long before Eastern Europe began knocking on the EU's door, but taken to a far greater degree of specificity with the advent, or better yet return, of the Eastern part of the continent after the fall of communism.

The stakes of enlargement go way beyond the technical, as an EU that is in dire need of more self-generated resources is having trouble managing its already frail budget compared to both its population and the might of the combined economies of its member states. Indeed, amid the criticism stemming from within regarding its less-than-frugal administrative bodies and inability to reform its gluttonous policies, with the CAP spearheading the list, the EU is still willing to spare almost one tenth of its resources for the regional and global views it upholds. With candidate countries benefitting from the Instrument for Pre-Accession[6] and a concentric approach to additional financing going from the Neighbourhood Policy all the way to the Eastern Partnership and beyond, while keeping the Union in first position in terms of humanitarian assistance, the matter of financing remains prominent in its long-term foreign policy planning.

Competition is rife in an area that is as disputed and as fragmented as the Western Balkans, which is all the more reason for the EU to wish to maintain its assistance and guidance programmes. With China investing massively in the local infrastructure and Russia maintaining a solid culturally and religiously-rooted foothold (at least) in Serbia, the EU is facing some stiff competition and, unlike its competitors, it portrays itself as the advocate of a type of change that is not always at hand. This political card is constantly being played in the geopolitics of the broader region, with the Caucasus standing as another worrying example, and Ukraine being dragged into a climate of fear with the recent mobilisation of Russia troops at – or even within – its internationally recognised borders.

[6] Zoran Nechev, Jelica Minić, Adnan Ćerimagić and Klodjan Seferaj, *The Credible Enlargement Perspective for the Western Balkans through the lenses of the Berlin Process*, Institute for Democracy "Societas Civilis" – Skopje, 2018, pp. 15-17.

That said, foreign policy hurdles come from both outside and within the chancelleries of the Union itself, in the thorny case of Kosovo.[7] Far be it for us to engage in an analysis of the roots, zenith and aftermath of the conflicts that have rendered the case of Kosovo unique in the region at this time, but the fact of the matter is that enlargement in the Western Balkans meets with disputed boundaries and the lack of a solution to this predicament only fuels anti-European feelings and actions. There are no fewer than five EU members that have not granted official recognition to Kosovo – Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Spain – in an unprecedented conflict of views between the EU's institutions and the latter.

Can the EU enlarge to encompass all the Western Balkan region (Kosovo included and a hypothetically reformed Bosnia and Herzegovina stepping in as well) even amid the divergent opinions from within the Union on the statehood of the Yugoslav breakaway province? Is the case of Cyprus a useful precedent meant to at least provisionally overcome the international law hurdles posed by this peculiar situation? Will the constitutional balance forged upon ethnic grounds of Bosnia and Herzegovina undergo acceptable alterations that make the country eligible for joining the EU whilst maintaining its fragile tranquillity? These are merely a sample of the borderline unbearable queries the bureaucratic EU and its increasingly dissimilar member states from the standpoint of political aspirations need to address if the Western Balkan file is ever to be closed in a convenient and inclusive manner.

Even if answers were to be found in the change of attitudes – and perhaps regimes – on both sides of the negotiation table, one begs the question of timing. Throughout the history of EC/EU enlargement, haste would come to mind on numerous occasions – be it the Mediterranean overture of the 1980s or the spectacular Eastern tidal waves of the 2000s. Then came a certain Jean-Claude Juncker who, for the first time, pulled the plug on the enlargement device and refused to offer any chance of advancement during his tenure as Commission president. To add insult to injury, he later churned out a 2025 deadline[8] for the Balkan candidates that

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[7] Marko Milanovic and Michael Wood (eds.), *The Law and Politics of the Kosovo Advisory Opinion*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 264-265.

[8] EU Advances Membership Talks for Montenegro, Serbia', *Euractiv*, 12 December 2017, www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/eu-advances-membership-talks-for-serbia-montenegro, last access 8 December 2021.

put a tremendous amount of pressure on all parties involved, allowing the cloud of failure to loom on the already shady horizon of a process marred with vetoes on cultural and historical grounds, changes of government that brought radical twists, and reforms paralysed by mind-numbing national procedures. Heavy is the head that wears the crown of enlargement, one could lament, but this would be ridiculously overstated. We, inside the EU, are far from finding ourselves on the horns of a dilemma. Russian hostility, frail political regimes attempting fast-tracked reforms in the Western Balkans, shaky EU attitudes that play internal political cards with the candidate countries on the sacrificial altar, so goes the gloomy score. But, on the other hand, we have a combined population of barely more than 12 million in the candidate states from the region, rather small and manageable macroeconomic indicators, a still positive view of the local population on the EU project (unlike some internal perceptions), and truly no viable alternative for a form of historical reparation that would not be a first in the EU's existence. Why wait then? The dangers of halting enlargement appear to be far greater than the sacrifices – granted – a rattled Union could make by prompting more change from the inside, with the aid of the appealing structural funds, making the IPA pale in comparison.

Alternatives are already starting to take shape, even though some attempt to present themselves in the form of an antechamber to hypothetical EU accession, such as the Open Balkan Initiative. This nano-Schengen area encompassing Serbia, Albania and North Macedonia – but not Montenegro – is not a new concept, but it does bring Serbia and Albania to the same negotiation table after a long stall in bilateral relations. On the other hand, the free trade that comes with this predictable endeavour can give the participants a taste of what it would be like to align themselves to the requirements of the EU and join an infinitely more advantageous economic project, but it can also contribute to their alienation if the zone has been created to console three countries that are losing hope amid the protracted enlargement process. And hope is precisely what the region needs and has caught a glimpse of every now and then. Just when the name dispute between then-FYROM and Greece was deemed to endure for generations, political will prompted a refreshing Prespa Agreement.[9] Will Bulgaria's veto against North Macedonia be lifted following a Prespa

[9] Vassilis Pergantis, "The Prespa Agreement between Greece and North Macedonia and the Settlement of the Name Dispute: of Objective Regimes, Erga Omnes Obligations and Treaty Effects on Third Parties", *Questions of International Law*, No. 65, 2020, pp. 63-85.

2.0 pact in the near future? Will Aleksandar Vučić clarify Serbia's commitment as a booster for more and better bilateral negotiations with a Kosovo that is here to stay? It appears that the Western Balkan saga remains shrouded in uncertainty and unprecedented obstacles that the EU needs to tackle if it is to prove that it has learnt the lesson of endurance and taken up the role many of us hope it is tough enough to drape itself in – that of giving an honest path to prosperity, overcoming historical animosity and a sustainable future.

The European Union seems to have been embracing an attitude of complacency towards the Western Balkan region over the last years. Back in 2003, during the EU-Western Balkan Summit in Thessaloniki, the European Union reiterated "its unequivocal support to the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries" by famously declaring that "the future of the Balkans is within the European Union."[10] Later and gradually, this enthusiasm somehow materialized into a recurrent idea which set the need for each country in the Western Balkan region to meet the Copenhagen criteria and to overcome challenges and hurdles prior to any preparation for integration. However, by 2020 none of the candidate countries has joined the EU yet.

A brief overlook of EU's relations with countries from the Western Balkan region indicates certain similar developments, but it also reveals an EU approach on an area which is much more heterogeneous and complex than the "Western Balkan" catch-all designation includes. The countries from the region labelled as Western Balkans have been going through a difficult post-socialist and post-war reconstruction. As discussed in previous works[11], the identities in the region have always been multiple

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[10] Thessaloniki Summit Press Release 2003, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/PRES_03_163.

[11] Laura M. Herța; Adrian G. Corpădean, "The social construction of identity and belonging. Perceptions of EU in the Western Balkans", in Anna Skolimowska (ed.), *Perceptions of the European Union's Identity in International Relations*, London: Routledge, 2019, pp. 42-88; Laura M. Herța, "Why Re-imagining the Western Balkans is important for the New European Union", in Valentin Naumescu (ed.), *The New European Union and Its Global Strategy: From Brexit to PESCO*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020, pp. 237-256; Laura M. Herța; Adrian G. Corpădean, "Europeanisation in the Western Balkans: Challenges and Pitfalls", in Miriam Sette (ed.), *Europe: Critical Thinking in Critical Times*, London Centre for Interdisciplinary Research, 2021, pp. 25-41; Adrian Corpădean; Laura M. Herța, "The Dangers of Halting Enlargement Prospects in the Western Balkans", *Stosunki Międzynarodowe / International Relations*, 3/2019 vol. 55, ISSN 0209-0961, DOI: https://doi.org/10.7366/020909613201901, pp. 7-19.

and intersecting. As a whole, the identity of the region is decided by outside actors and seems to be exogenous to the countries' agency. The term Western Balkans incorporates both prospects for future European integration, but also recollections of Balkan-ness, as opposed the rest of Europe. Such identity (with all its historical burden and innate stereotypes) has been attributed to the region. There are both rejections of this "given" identity and forms of incorporation, as if one cannot escape it.

The term Western Balkans has every now and then resurfaced within the European Union's discourse. By now, phrases such as "sharing everything but institutions", "the need to keep a European perspective", "the future of Western Balkans is within the European Union" have become famous and have been quoted in various policy recommendations, articles, books, analyses. The fact that the Western Balkans have regularly returned to the European Union's spotlight, whilst seemingly being continuously left outside, led some to believe that the region is taken for granted.[12] Others assessed the post-Yugoslav space in terms of "in, almost in, and out" and as a three-layered area, namely 1) EU members Slovenia and Croatia, 2) strong candidates Macedonia and Montenegro and 3) the complex cases of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.[13] Others have distinguished among the "entrants, candidates and potential candidates."[14]

The main arguments defended here are that 1) the EU hastily places all countries of the region under the umbrella term "Western Balkans" and somehow strips each of them of individuality and agency, but also adds the Balkan-ness identity; 2) that the EU has acted with complacency towards the region over the last years; 3) enlargement in the Western Balkans meets with disputed boundaries and the lack of a solution to this predicament only fuels anti-European feelings and actions; 4) the Western Balkan saga remains shrouded in uncertainty and unprecedented obstacles that the EU needs to tackle if it is to prove that it has learnt the lesson of endurance.

[12] Horia Ciurtin, *Left Behind? Reassessing the Balkan Quest for EU Integration*, European Institute of Romania, Policy Briefs Series, No. 2, Bucharest, February 2017, accessed September 28, 2018, p. 6, http://ier.ro/sites/default/files/pdf/Policy_Brief_nr.%202_Horia_Ciurtin_Left_behind_0.pdf.
Branislav Radeljić (ed.), *Europe and the Post-Yugoslav Space*, Ashgate, 2013, pp. 211-218.
[14] Adam Fagan, *Europe's Balkan Dilemma. Paths to Civil Society or State-Building*?, London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, pp. 19-20.

The present volume brings together the selected and compiled articles presented and discussed during the international conference *International Relations and Area Studies: Focus on Western Balkans* organized by the Faculty of European Studies in December 2020. The book is divided into five sections: the first one focuses on various challenges and dilemmas regarding the European Union's enlargement towards the Western Balkan region. The second one looks at historical developments in the region in order to shape political analyses and predictions. The third part tackles the European Union's institutional reforms and undertakes a discourse analysis perspective, by analysing the European Commission's communication strategies. The fourth part is built around salient issues pertaining to efforts to build democracy in the Western Balkan countries, such as civil society, human rights, administrative reform. Finally, the last section brings together miscellaneous pieces centred on issues related to peace education and identity issues.

The first chapter, written by Stefano Bianchini, well-known specialist on former Yugoslavia, deals with a crucial aspect pertaining to the European integration process of Yugoslavia's successor states, namely post-conflict reconciliation. The chapter raises the following research question: to what extent could the model framed by the European Union be emulated in the post-Yugoslav space? The impact of the strategies adopted by outside powers, mostly Western countries, internal obstacles, enduring uncertainties, efforts of civil society are all included in this analysis.

The second chapter, titled *Disintegrazione, de-integrazione, integrazione differenziata o allargamento per l'Unione Europea post-COVID 19*?, analyses the various potential developments of the European Union structure shortly referring to the literature, then more extensively to government and political parties' policy proposals. The chapter suggests a set of options which emerges and includes disintegration, de-integration, various kinds of differentiated integration, and reforms to change the existing relationship between national and EU government levels. Depending on the different scenarios, the possibility of EU enlargement to some neighbouring countries (mainly Western Balkans countries) is estimated.

The third chapter focuses on the role of the Albanian Community in the European integration process of North Macedonia. According to the authors' view, North Macedonia is a clear example where there is lack of common identity among its constituent ethnic and national groups. The

authors argue that the way ahead for North Macedonia is the European identity which is critical in circumstances like those characterizing spaces where several nationalities have to coexist within one state framework. Structures that transcend nations and overcome nationalism are building blocks of this effort. The study focuses on the so called Alban question in North Macedonia which represents a very complex problem. It includes the unification aspirants of certain Albanians, the contradictory political, economic and social development, and the attempts to join Europe.

The next chapter called *Il futuro dei Balcani Occidentali nell'Unione Europea tra le riforme e la difficoltà di sviluppo economico (The Future of the Western Balkans within the European Union, between reforms and hurdles in economic development)* deals with processes of integration and Europeanization of the Western Balkans and argues that they represent an obvious objective of the European Union always linked to the necessary principle of democratization and stabilization. The study focuses on the European Union's agenda for regional cooperation of the Balkan countries, an economic integration between the European Union and the Balkans being fundamental to guarantee political stabilization and economic opportunities.

The fifth chapter titled *Identity Issues in the States of the Western Balkans (Republic of North Macedonia) in the Process of preparing for EU Accession* investigates the relationships between the states from the Western Balkan region in defining their identity as parts of the values and the criteria for accession to the EU, by looking at the nation-building process after 1990. The author argues that the multi-ethnic societies from Western Balkans are trying to diminish the internal asymmetries by experiencing the intercultural way of living, paving the way to the accession to the EU. Also, according to the author's view, the pluralistic principle with its sociocultural dimension is approached differently by the states and provinces in Western Balkans.

Another chapter include in this first section highlights how the geopolitical games of the great powers are known in the Western Balkans, especially in Serbia. The author's goal is to emphasize in a broad way how Serbia is taking advantage of the attention of both the West and the East to maintain its political ties, economic interests and prospects for accession to the European Union. In this regard, the author focuses on some important aspects of Serbia's relationship with three great powers, namely the

European Union, Russia and China and on the factors which shape their interactions.

Finally, the last study included in this section tackles Montenegro's accession process to the EU by focusing on a swift chronology starting with the moment of its independence from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006 - a part of former Yugoslavia, which prompted the country's application to the European Union only two years later. A favourable opinion on the part of the European Commission in 2010 has determined the commencement of the accession process no later than December 2011, while the negotiations formally started in June 2012. Eight years later Montenegro has opened the final chapter of negotiations, reaffirming the commitment and willingness to successfully finish the EU accession process. The author argues that, as this state undergoes deep changing procedures such as strengthening the governance, addressing economic imbalances, and improving the administrative capacity to make sure the *acquis communautaire* is properly implemented, Montenegro has made it clear that it values quality over celerity, taking small but sure steps towards EU integration.

The second part of the book starts with a contribution which focuses on the textbook History of Eastern Europe from Napoleon to the end of the First World War (written by Giulia Lami) and illustrates the ways in which the history of the Balkans and in particular of the Western Balkans was addressed, considering didactic needs and historiographical study. After having illustrated which area is meant by the name Eastern Europe, the authors takes into consideration the ways in which the Balkans are placed in this space, and more generally in the European space, briefly reviewing the chapters and paragraphs in which some specific moments and problems concerning the Balkan Peninsula between 1815 and 1925 were treated.

The next study analyses the conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary that practically led to the First World War. All the relevant circumstances and actors of international relations are presented from the respective historical epoch. The focus of the author is placed on Serbia and Austria-Hungary and on the options that were open to Serbia, the choices it made, and what shaped that decision. The goal of the chapter is to see how two neighbouring countries that started with excellent relations ended up in a war of total destruction. Throughout the chapter, the author believes that there was a certain paradigm of behaviour of a small state in a conflict

with great power as well as the possible influence of third forces as allies. The above are analysed through some aspects of structural realism. The conclusion is that both countries believed in the inevitability of a military solution sooner or later but the support of their great allies were crucial. For Austria-Hungary, this was a war to preserve its prestige and status as a great power and ensure its internal stability. For Serbia, it was a war for freedom and the preservation of independence which they hoped could grow into a war of unification with the rest South Slavic lands that were part of the Habsburg monarchy. The two neighbours were kingdoms and, hence, this was not an ideological clash in this part. Nonetheless, there seems to have been a direct clash between the multinational concept of the Habsburg Empire and the national concept of the Serbian kingdom.

Another chapter from this section focuses on the rise and decay of the Greek merchant bankers from Livorno, during 1795-1891. The author shows that Greek merchants, often working as bankers, made huge fortunes with the export trade of wheat from the Black Sea to Western Mediterranean and Great Britain since the last decade of 18th Century to the 1860s. They had special advantages to settle in Livorno and contributed to revive the economy of the city. When the trading wheat changed, they tried to diversify their activities adapting themselves to the opportunities the local economy offered. They invested in railroads, banks and industrial activities, with the ability and a clear vision of economic and social evolution. But, the author underlines, were not able to cope with the difficulties arising from the oligopolistic environment in the sugar industry where they were last comers.

The next author believes that there is no need to argue about the need for European integration of the states and peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. Today, therefore, the area is an integral part of the continent and is in the attention and interests of the European Union, but the actual process of joining the union is more difficult than anywhere. While all states in the former communist bloc are EU members, the six Balkans countries are still in different stages of negotiations. By comparing historical, seemingly concomitant and similar developments, the author aims to demonstrate that differences in options and influences shaped different ideals, realities and vocations. The European vocation of the Balkan peoples and states can be discussed only in terms of its intensity, the author argues, because through its geographical location and historical

evolution, this part of the continent belongs historically and is destined for modern European construction.

After the interesting historical accounts and perspectives compiled in section II, the third part of the book brings together equally interesting approaches on communication strategies and reform within the European Union. The next paper, called *The 2020 Enlargement Package of the European Commission for the Western Balkans. Case Study: Communication on Enlargement*, aims to analyze the ways in which the European Commission communicates on a specific topic, with direct reference to content (themes), language (vocabulary, grammar, linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms) and formatting. From the author's perspective, the preoccupation of experts for institutional communication goes rather on content and not on language and formatting.

Another article included here explores the possibilities for EU reform generated by the new method France (and eight other countries) suggested for future enlargement. According to the author, the European Union's need to review and make more efficient its institutional framework and decision-making process are well-known and constitute a matter of constant debate since at least the Treaty of Nice – the first to impose substantial changes at the level of EU institutions as enlargement to Central and Eastern European countries has been decided. One question, however, has never been answered: how can the EU work at 33-34 members, once enlargement is completed and matches, more or less, the geography of the continent. The chapter delves into the possibilities suddenly offered, suggesting that EU reform can unfold in parallel with strategies of inclusion of Western Balkan states in the policies of the EU, going together. The author argues that this gradual incorporation would largely facilitate the transformations needed in Europe's institutional design.

Finally, the last chapter of this section examines the references to the Western Balkans in the discourse of the current European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen. After being elected, President Ursula von der Leyen has made multiple declarations regarding the future enlargement of the European Union including references to the Western Balkans. After only one year of being in this position, she has also attended several meetings with officials from these countries, as much as the pandemic context conditions have permitted. Thus, this study evaluates stylistic features of Ursula von der Leyen's discourse regarding enlargement. The empirical analysis suggests that words like partners,

continuation, belong, priority or part of Europe are the most significant discursive representations of the Western Balkans in the discourses of the European Commission president.

The fourth section of this volume is centred on efforts to build democracy in the Western Balkans and investigates salient issues such as civil society, human rights, administrative reform etc. The first chapter included here focuses on a human-centred approach on building democracy. The author argues that, when confronted with waves of democratisation across Eastern Europe and later across the Balkans, political science scholarship has attempted to identify, analyse and deconstruct the key instruments and procedures which are relevant during processes of democratisation. These approaches have highlighted a key variable, namely a human-based understanding of such processes, which shows the range of options, as well as unpredictability of choices, the plurality of subjective meanings and constructions, as well as the fluidity of behaviours. By undertaking a constructivist methodology, the author argues that the social movements across countries of the Western Balkan region indicate a reinvigoration of civil society which might provide the current hybrid regimes with a new orientation.

The next chapter starts with the following premise: in the field of public administration and administrative law, countries that have a candidate status or are potential candidates must have administrative systems and public institutions capable of adapting and implementing the European Union legislation. Hence, the main aim of this study is to provide an overview of the current reforms in the field of public administration in the six countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia), with a thorough analysis of the public procurement area, which is considered as having a key role in ensuring a smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth in Europe. Therefore, the author focuses on key indicators on how governments in this region work and perform in this specific area, emphasizing the main achievements, mainly in terms of legislative and institutional framework, and the main challenges, such as delays in implementation, lack of harmonization, and inadequate control.

The next study in this section deals with the process of Europeanization of interest groups in the Western Balkan countries. According to the author, interest groups in the region capture a common element regardless of the nature of the actions, the way they act, and by

what means, namely to influence government policies. Despite the process of accession in the European Union, the process of Europeanization of these interest groups is at the beginning. It is the author's belief that there is no interest group culture and that the region does not know how to benefit from opening up to other structural identities, especially the European ones. The Europeanization has a transformative power, but there are no indications on the specific methods or strategies on how the Western Balkans interest groups can become active and recognised on the EU scene. The emergence of interest groups can become a precondition of successful democratization and an important step in the process of Europeanization.

Moving forward, another chapter sets the goal of examining the process of the Europeanization that has occurred in the Western Balkans over the past twenty years and of understanding the demographic changes that have occurred in the area, following that process, while addressing the human rights issues that have evolved in the region. Since the region is attempting to be a part of the EU, it must comply with certain demands, one of which is to attain and sustain stability in the region, in terms of statehood. As a region which in recent years has taken in many returning refugees, it now needs to adapt them back in the society and make sure they are treated with the same rights as those of permanent citizens. According to the author's view, since the Western Balkans has never been a proper western democracy, this is not an easy task to achieve.

The next chapter revolves around the following research question: did the elections organized in June 2020 represent a plebiscite for Aleksandar Vučić? The author shows that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the opposition renewed its call for a boycott, while A. Vučić maintains the ballot despite the protests. The author argues that these elections were an opportunity to take stock of the state of Serbian politics and the practice of power by the President and that the latter's victory in the elections and his mastery of new communication technologies are major assets in the strengthening of a populist regime built around him.

By undertaking a legal and judicial perspective, the next chapter shows that the Western Balkans play an important role in the area of the European relations. With the exception of Slovenia and Croatia, all the other countries composing the Western Balkans (Serbia, Montenegro, Republic of North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Albania) are still struggling to get as close as possible to the European Union. The author believes that the European integration processes in the area of

Western Balkans is strongly connected to a legal and judicial common perspective between the European Union and the Western Balkans states. The aim of the study is to focus on the following legal and judicial topics that have shaped and are going to shape the relations between the EU and the Western Balkans states: 1) the judicial battles fought before the International Court of Justice (Serbia vs. Croatia, Serbia vs. Bosnia Herzegovina, the advisory opinion over the statue of Kosovo) by Western Balkans states and how it will have an impact after these countries' accession to the EU; here a special focus will be provided over the Slovenia vs. Croatia (C-457/18) case before the European Union Court of Justice; 2) the explanation of the rule of law standards from the EU point of view and how can it be applied to the Western Balkans countries; 3) how can disputes between Western Balkans be resolved by international arbitration procedures. In the end, the chapter provides us with a conclusion over how stronger legal and judicial ties between the European Union and the Western Balkans countries will help develop a new phase in the European integration process.

Last, but not least, the chapter called Comparison between Croatia's and Serbia's policies in response to Covid-19. Dissimilar actions taken by two political and social structures has the following starting point: despite of a common ethnogenesis as Slavic peoples (without regard for political, social and cultural developments) both Croatia and Serbia reacted in different manners, demonstrating different approaches in responding to the health challenges caused by Coronavirus. The motivation of the two authors is to discover and prove how two related, still distinctive nationalities can influence the way states have adapted/responded to the new imposed health regulations meant to reduce the exposure to COVID-19, taking into consideration their cultural behavior and heritage. In addition to the actual study of Serbian or Croatian COVID-19 policies, which are obviously conditioned by membership of certain international structures, the authors consider that an anthropological approach would be adequate in order to better understand the political decisions of the two states.

The last section of the book brings together three interesting case studies. The first one deals with the phenomenon of "white orphans", namely the tragic situation of children abandoned by their mothers because of economic difficulties. The female economic migrants arriving in Italy (and other West European countries) from Eastern Europe indicate a

growing phenomenon over the last years: a huge number of children are left behind (especially in Romania) by both parents who leave the country in search of economic opportunities.

The second case study of this section focus ethnic conflicts and peace education in times of conflict. The author shows that Israel, Northern Ireland and Cyprus are three countries suffering from historical ethnic conflicts. Yet in all three, students from different backgrounds meet each other in schools. In Northern Ireland and Israel this happens in special institutions which were set up by NGOs, in Cyprus they meet in international schools. The article compares the policies of the education ministries regarding these schools. It shows that where peace agreements have already been reached (as in Northern Ireland) the government supports shared education. Where the conflicts are still ongoing (Israel, Cyprus) the government does not support integrated education.

Finally, the third case study focuses on the Nationality Law, or by its full name the "Basic Law Israel- The Nation State of the Jewish People", which seeks to anchor the Jewish identity of the state, with its characteristics and symbols. On the other hand, the author indicates, Israeli society is a multicultural society, a region that Jews immigrated to since the 19th century. Therefore, the law of nationality breaks all the conventions between the government, which has been controlled by the Jews ever since 1948, and the minorities who lived in this part of the country, before the immigration of the Jews in the 19th century. The purpose of the chapter is to investigate the decision-making process regarding the enactment of the Nationality Law by the government and its implication later.

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Part I:

The EU’s Enlargement and the Western Balkan Countries: Challenges, Dilemmas, Prospects

STATI SUCCESSORI DELLA JUGOSLAVIA E DILEMMI DELL'INTEGRAZIONE EUROPEA: SI PUO EMULARE L'ESEMPIO DELLA UE?

Stefano Bianchini

Introduzione

Formalmente, tutti gli Stati successori della Jugoslavia hanno manifestato la volontà di entrare a far parte a pieno titolo dell'Unione Europea. Questa aspirazione, tuttavia, poggia su una simultanea, e contraddittoria, presenza tanto di fragilità politiche (locali e internazionali), quanto di talune incoraggianti indicazioni comunitarie. In sintesi, gli aspetti di fragilità fanno riferimento, in particolare, al perseverare di una transizione al tempo stesso post-socialista e post-traumatica, giacché essa deve fare i conti con il collasso della federazione jugoslava, le sue conseguenze geopolitiche e istituzionali, le politiche di aggiustamento strutturale economico-sociale per lo più importate dall'Occidente e il superamento dei traumi provocati dai dieci anni di guerra, che hanno caratterizzato il periodo 1991-2001. Per quanto concerne, invece, l'accesso alla UE, grande rilevanza ha assunto la decisione del summit di Salonicco nel 2003, allorché fu assicurata a tutti gli Stati successori della federazione jugoslava (oltre all'Albania) l'inclusione nelle istituzioni comunitarie una volta che fossero stati soddisfatti i criteri di adesione, per rispettare i quali sono stati creati gruppi di lavoro, fondi e programmi specifici, tutti mirati al raggiungimento dell'obiettivo preposto[1].

Come sappiamo, a quasi vent'anni dall'assunzione di quell'impegno, solo Slovenia e Croazia sono riuscite ad entrare nella UE e solo la prima ha aderito all'euro e al trattato di Schengen. Le altre repubbliche hanno avviato negoziati di adesione o si trovano ancora in uno status di candidati o, addirittura di pre-candidatura. In altre parole, se si considera il tempo trascorso fra le promesse di allargamento manifestate a Copenaghen (1993) e l'adesione dei Paesi del campo sovietico (fra il 2004 e il 2007), è evidente che – nel caso del mondo culturale slavo-meridionale e

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[1] Cfr. Hubert Isak (ed.), *A European Perspective for the Western Balkans*, Recht, Wien, 2007 con Heather Grabbe and Kirsty Hughes, *Enlarging the EU Eastwards*, RIIA, London, 2000.

albanese – la dinamica cronologica si presenta molto più diluita e condizionata da crescente scetticismo, se non da resistenze nei confronti dei promessi allargamenti da parte, soprattutto, di vecchi membri dell'Unione.

Diventa inevitabile, quindi, chiedersi quali siano state le ragioni, primariamente politiche, che hanno suggerito alla UE, all'inizio del nuovo millennio, di estendere il proprio modello integrativo ad una regione che era stata protagonista, fino a poco tempo prima, di un processo segnato da violenta disgregazione. E quali siano state, poi, le motivazioni di fondo che hanno prodotto un processo negoziale tanto lungo da non intravvedersi, in realtà, ancora lo sbocco.

1. Le ragioni dell'allargamento della UE ad Est e le guerre di successione jugoslave.

Un'efficace sintesi delle motivazioni che avevano consigliato l'allargamento dell'UE ad Est fu esposta dall'allora ministro degli esteri della Germania, Joschka Fischer, in un discorso all'Università Humboldt nel 2000; un discorso, questo, tanto famoso, quanto inconsueto per i contenuti, giacché rari furono, anche a quell'epoca, gli sforzi del mondo politico mirati a fornire spiegazioni pubbliche relative alla strategia adottata a favore dell'allargamento della UE. Al contrario, Fischer ebbe il coraggio di affrontare apertamente la questione e, in quell'occasione, esplicitò le proprie preoccupazioni soffermandosi sull'impatto che avrebbe potuto esercitare l'assenza di una politica inclusiva della UE a fronte di un collasso del campo sovietico abbandonato a se stesso, privo di un percorso di stabilizzazione democratica e di rilancio dello sviluppo.

Fischer mise allora in guardia l'Unione Europea dal rischio di mantenere il Continente diviso fra una parte sempre più integrata e un'altra sostanzialmente lasciata in preda alle proprie convulsioni, condizionate da un ritorno a vecchi sistemi di potere e a devastanti nazionalismi che avrebbero messo in discussione un futuro di pace. Per essere ancora più preciso egli chiarì come "*A divided system of states in Europe without an overarching order would, in the long term, make Europe a continent of uncertainty, and, in the medium term, these traditional lines of conflict would shift from Eastern Europe into the EU again. If that happened, Germany, in particular, would be the big loser. The geo-political reality after 1989*

left no serious alternative to the eastward enlargement of the European institutions, and this has never been truer than now, in the age of globalization[2].

Anche se tenuto nell'anno 2000, il senso di questo intervento si comprende meglio alla luce degli eventi che caratterizzarono in particolare il 1992, ossia l'anno in cui effettivamente l'Europa rischiò di piombare nei fantasmi del passato a causa di una incontrollata diffusione della violenza nazionalista. Non a caso, per tornare a Fischer, questi fece esplicita menzione, nel suo discorso alla Humboldt, del caso jugoslavo, da considerare come un ammonimento per il futuro: *"A glance at the former Yugoslavia shows us the consequences, even if they would not always and everywhere have been so extreme"*.

A riprova, basti qui menzionare come il conflitto che stava travolgendo la federazione jugoslava si fosse esteso proprio nel 1992 alla Bosnia-Erzegovina, rendendo evidente come le guerre di successione jugoslave mirassero alla ridefinizione dei confini secondo le logiche tradizionali della politica di potenza. È noto, infatti, come l'estensione delle azioni militari nel cuore della vecchia federazione avesse come obiettivo la spartizione dei territori fra Croazia e Serbia, secondo un negoziato che era già stato avviato il 25 marzo 1991 dai presidenti dei due Paesi, Tuđman e Milošević, nella villa di Karađorđevo e proseguito successivamente dalle due delegazioni che essi stessi avevano costituito proprio a tale scopo[3].

Nel medesimo periodo in cui la Bosnia-Erzegovina veniva coinvolta nel conflitto, scoppiò la guerra nella Moldavia ex sovietica, a seguito delle dichiarazioni di indipendenza della Transnistria e della Gagauzia. Alle ostilità presero parte pure le truppe della XIV Armata Rossa di stanza nella zona. Solo successivamente ad un cessate il fuoco fu possibile negoziare una mediazione con i Gagauzi. Analoghi tentativi con la regione secessionista al di là del Dniestr non conobbero, invece, seguiti significativi. Da allora, infatti, questo quasi-Stato continua ad esistere, senza essere riconosciuto da alcun paese al mondo, benché sia protetto da

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[2] Joschka Fischer, *From Confederacy to Federation - Thoughts on the finality of European integration*, Speech delivered at the Humboldt University in Berlin, the 12 May 2000, https://ec.europa.eu/dorie/fileDownload.do?docId=192161&cardId=192161.

[3] Si v. la testimonianza di Dušan Bilandžić, *Povijest izbliza. Memorarski zapisi 1945-2005*, Prometej, Zagre, 2006, pp. 372ss; Miloš Minić, *Dogovori u Karađorđevu o podeli Bosne i Herzegovine*, Rabic, Sarajevo, 1998; Predrag Lucić (ed.), *Stenogrami o podjeli Bosne*, 2 voll., Kultura & Rasvjeta, Sarajevo-Split, 2005.

un "ombrello" russo[4]. D'altra parte, la questione della Moldavia e della sua collocazione internazionale, una volta crollata l'URSS, costituì motivo di gravi frizioni fra Romania e Ungheria, a tal punto che il primo ministro ungherese József Antall minacciò di chiedere la revisione del trattato di Trianon nel caso in cui Romania e Moldavia avessero deciso di procedere all'unificazione, assecondando una richiesta che era parsa, all'epoca, trovare consensi in ambedue i paesi neolatini[5]. Nel frattempo nel Caucaso, le tensioni fra Armenia e Azerbaigian avevano prodotto un conflitto militare a causa della regione contesa del Nagorno-Karabakh. Infine, ancora non si era spenta l'eco della dichiarazione di Boris El'cyn del 27 agosto 1991 allorché, all'indomani del fallito colpo di stato, sostenne la necessità di procedere a modifiche di frontiera fra le repubbliche costituenti, nel caso in cui si fosse giunti alla disgregazione della federazione sovietica (e ciò acuì subito le distanze fra Russia e Ucraina)[6].

In altre parole, fra la fine del 1991 e durante tutto il 1992 si erano creati i presupposti per un'espansione dei conflitti militari nel nome di un neo-nazionalismo che – per lo meno sul piano ideologico – fu accolto con una certa condiscendenza da parte dell'Occidente, in quanto ritenuto manifestazione di un'aspirazione alla "libertà dei popoli". Tale libertà parve sancìta dal processo di unificazione tedesca e trovò modo di radicarsi nei convincimenti di buona parte dell'opinione pubblica come conseguenza sia del superamento dell'oppressione comunista, sia dell'affermazione del diritto all'autodeterminazione. Tuttavia, fu presto evidente come la serie di eventi che abbiamo or ora menzionato avrebbe piuttosto condotto a ben più drammatici risvolti nelle relazioni intra-europee rispetto al processo, per lo più pacifico, che aveva caratterizzato la fine del comunismo nel Vecchio Continente.

Di tali rischi fu pienamente consapevole il primo ministro francese Edouard Balladur che, nel 1993, suggerì la firma di un "Patto di Stabilità" imperniato su una serie di accordi bilaterali e multilaterali fra paesi potenzialmente candidati ad entrare nell'Unione Europea e fra questi e la stessa UE con l'obiettivo di assicurare il diritto delle minoranze e il

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[4] Charles King, *The Moldovans. Romania, Russia and the Politics of Culture*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 2000, pp. 189-208.

[5] Si v. il mio *Sarajevo le radici dell'odio*, Edizioni Associate, Roma, 2003, pp. 131-132.

[6] Rinvio al mio *The Western Decline, Multipolarity and the Challenges of Identity in the making of Russian Foreign Policy*, in Stefano Bianchini and Antonio Fiori (eds.), *Rekindling the Strong State in Russia and China*, Brill, Leiden, 2020, p. 256.

rifiuto del ricorso alla violenza in caso di dispute territoriali. Non a caso, di lì a poco, tale questione venne inclusa nel primo dei tre criteri fissati al summit di Copenaghen al fine di stabilire le condizioni in base alle quali un Paese avrebbe potuto presentare la sua candidatura all'UE[7]. E nonostante le resistenze iniziali, opposte in particolare da Polonia e Repubblica Ceca, il 20 e 21 marzo 1995 a Parigi vennero firmati 92 accordi fra i Paesi dell'Europa Centro-Orientale (Russia inclusa) e fra questi e l'UE, lungo una traiettoria geopolitica che dall'Estonia si estendeva fino alla Bulgaria, rendendo plasticamente visibile quanto il "virus del nazionalismo" fosse stato isolato all'interno del territorio della dissolta federazione jugoslava[8]. Al tempo stesso, questo straordinario evento, che non è ricordato spesso nelle analisi politiche e nelle ricostruzioni storiche di quel periodo, gettò le fondamenta per l'allargamento della UE ad Est e fornì una solida fonte di sostegno alla pace e alla stabilità non solo nello spazio di quello che era stato il campo sovietico, ma in parte anche nel territorio della vecchia Unione Sovietica.

Il risultato di tale lungimirante politica si è potuto verificare nell'accelerazione dei negoziati per l'allargamento a partire dal 1999, allorché essi vennero simultaneamente avviati con ben 10 paesi e conclusi positivamente nel 2004, mentre per Romania e Bulgaria la trattativa si protrasse fino al 2007. Grazie, in buona misura, all'atmosfera politica che si era venuta a creare in quei frangenti fu possibile congelare (anche se non risolvere) i conflitti in Transnistria e nel Caucaso, abbassare i toni delle tensioni ungaro-romene, ottenere la firma di un trattato bilaterale fra Bucarest e Budapest il 16 settembre 1996, rispettando lo spirito del "Patto di Stabilità" di Balladur. Infine, il nuovo contesto politico rafforzò il processo di inclusione di rappresentanti delle minoranze etniche negli esecutivi di Bulgaria, Romania e Slovacchia; una situazione, queste, del tutto inimmaginabile nel ventennio interbellico, ma che costituì un'ulteriore

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[7] V. Francesco Privitera, *Le frontiere (o i limiti?) dell'allargamento: l'UE di fronte ai Balcani*, in Giuliana Laschi (ed.), *Oltre i confini: l'UE fra integrazione interna e relazioni esterne*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2011, pp. 207-241 e Riccardo Perissich, *L'Unione Europea. Una storia non ufficiale*, Longanesi, Milano, 2008.

[8] Si v. il mio *Liquid Nationalism and State Partitions in Europe*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2017, p. 217. Il testo dell'accordo *Pacte de stabilité en Europe à l'initiative de l'Union européenne (Paris, 20 et 21 mars 1995)* è in https://www.cvce.eu/obj/pacte_de_stabilite_en_europe_a_l_initiative_de_l_union_europeenne_paris_20_et_21_mars_1995-fr-0074091e-dcff-4468-a7f2-fa263c1025a1.html.

riprova di quanto le sollecitazioni di Joschka Fischer avessero delineato un percorso efficace e convincente.

Vero è che, nel caso degli stati successori della Jugoslavia, l'impatto esercitato da questa serie di convergenze non innescò conseguenze visibili nell'immediato: tuttavia, esso rafforzò la consapevolezza politica dei rischi che l'ideologia nazionalista avrebbe potuto comportare per la pace in Europa. Ne fu, quindi, favorita una maggiore vigilanza in campo diplomatico, nonché un consolidamento, nell'opinione pubblica europea, degli orientamenti a sostegno di misure di intervento, incluse quelle militari, di *peace building* e *peace enforcement*. E, in effetti, ciò si verificò con le azioni militari intraprese dalla NATO a fine agosto attorno alla città di Sarajevo sotto assedio. Poco dopo, fu avviata la trattativa diplomatica che condusse all'accordo di Dayton. Successivamente, tale metodologia incoraggiò l'amministrazione Clinton – sia pure senza l'approvazione dell'ONU – a bombardare Serbia e Montenegro a causa dell'inasprirsi della violenza in Kosovo (1999), nonché ad indurre la diplomazia euro-americana ad agire prontamente per circoscrivere il conflitto scoppiato in Macedonia nel 2001. Da allora, azioni militari nei Balcani non si sono più verificate, mentre il congelamento della violenza ha incoraggiato, pur fra mille esitazioni, i paesi dell'UE a lanciare prima un "Patto di Stabilità per il Sud-Est Europeo" e, quindi, a garantire, come si è detto, l'inclusione nell'UE a tutti gli stati successori della Jugoslavia e all'Albania nel summit di Salonicco del 2003[9].

Va altresì sottolineato come la decisione assunta nel 2003 fosse stata resa possibile anche da alcuni cambiamenti radicali avvenuti ai vertici politici dello spazio culturale jugoslavo. Non solo i negoziati per l'adesione all'Unione da parte della Slovenia si stavano per concludere positivamente, ma soprattutto i tre più importanti "signori della guerra" erano usciti di scena: Tuđman era morto nel 1999; Milošević era stato sconfitto alle elezioni presidenziali dell'ottobre 2000 e poi tradotto a Scheveningen per rispondere di crimini di guerra, genocidio e crimini contro l'umanità al costituito Tribunale penale per i crimini di guerra nella ex Jugoslavia (ICTY). Durante quello stesso mese di ottobre 2000 pure Izetbegović aveva dovuto lasciare le sue funzioni presidenziali a Sarajevo per ragioni di salute ed era a sua svolta scomparso alla fine del 2003. In altre parole, il mutato

[9] Jacques Rupnik (ed.), *The Western Balkans and the EU: "the Hour of Europe"*, Chaillot Papers, 126, Paris, 2011.

contesto regionale offrì l'occasione per una svolta risolutiva nell'atteggiamento assunto dall'UE, giacché essa poté abbandonare il ruolo fino ad allora svolto di negoziatore fra le parti belligeranti per assumere una funzione potenzialmente ben più efficace, quale promotrice di una concreta prospettiva politica a carattere inclusivo, in grado di prospettare un solido quadro di riferimento ai fini del consolidamento della democrazia, nonché assicurare lo sviluppo di un'economia di mercato.

E, in effetti, le istituzioni europee giunsero allora alla conclusione secondo cui un'inattesa finestra di opportunità si era aperta nell'area allora definita dei "Balcani occidentali". Parve possibile, insomma, superare di slancio le turbolenti e problematiche eredità lasciate dalla guerra per favorire lo sviluppo democratico e la riconciliazione, secondo uno schema che avrebbe potuto trarre ispirazione da quanto intervenuto fra Francia e Germania al termine della II guerra mondiale e che avevo reso possibile l'avvio del processo di integrazione europea. In questa prospettiva, l'accettazione dei tre criteri di Copenaghen e la piena collaborazione con l'ICTY furono ritenuti prerequisiti essenziali per attribuire solide fondamenta ad un approccio onnicomprensivo a integrazione e riconciliazione[10].

La questione, in verità, non riguardava solo gli Stati successori della Jugoslavia e, in particolare, quelli che più avevano sofferto della guerra, ma anche l'Albania, a causa delle profonde crisi istituzionali che l'avevano ripetutamente colpita nel corso degli anni Novanta, inducendo i paesi europei e l'ONU ad intervenire, sotto la guida italiana, per attuare due operazioni emergenziali di stabilizzazione, denominate "Pellicano" (1991-1993) e "Alba" (1997)[11]. Come poi si ebbe modo di constatare, non senza sorpresa per molti stati membri dell'Unione, il complesso legame fra democrazia e riconciliazione avrebbe riguardato la percezione dell'identità nazionale di altri paesi balcanici, come ad esempio la Grecia, almeno per

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[10] Cfr. Johan J. du Toit, *Justice and Reconciliation; Some Experiences from the ICTY and South Africa*, in Eltion Meka and Stefano Bianchini (eds.), *The Challenges of Democratization and Reconciliation in the post-Yugoslav Space*, Nomos, Baden-Baden, 2010, pp, 169-188; Paul Williams and Michael Scharf, *Peace with Justice? War Crimes and Accountability in the former Yugoslavia*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2002.

[11] V. Pino Agnetti, *Operazione Alba. La missione della forza multinazionale di protezione in Albania*, De Agostini, Roma, 1997; sull'operazione Pellicano v. Elez Biberaj, *Albania in Transition. The Rocky Road to Democracy*, Westview press, Boulder, 1998, pp. 160 e 235-36 e Franco Astuto, *Albania Italfor Pellicano (1991-1993)*, Marcovalerio, Torino, 1994.

quanto concerneva la questione relativa al nome della Repubblica di Macedonia, e la Bulgaria relativamente a storiografia e lingua macedoni.

In tali condizioni, se è vero che la UE ha assunto una crescente influenza nella regione, è altrettanto vero che, al contrario delle sue aspettative, l'entusiasmo formale manifestato dalle autorità regionali a più riprese rispetto alla prospettiva dell'adesione non è stato seguito da coerenti comportamenti delle élite al potere, spesso dimostratesi riluttanti a realizzare le riforme di adeguamento all'*acquis communautaire*. Nella sostanza, il sovrapporsi di eredità derivanti dall'esperienza socialista, dalle logiche militari, dalla complessa transizione post-socialista e post-traumatica (che non avevano pesato in Europa centrale o, comunque, non nella stessa misura) avevano contribuito a radicare una percezione etno-omogeneizzante della democrazia, lontana cioè dalle nuove tendenze culturali e istituzionali incentrate sul rispetto delle diversità.

2. *Democrazia e nazionalismo: una compatibilità ormai in declino?*

Indubbiamente, l'esercizio della democrazia si è molto modificato nel corso del tempo e soprattutto durante il XX secolo. Ai tempi della seconda guerra mondiale, il famoso sociologo Joseph Schumpeter aveva evidenziato due distinte concezioni della democrazia, cui egli attribuì rispettivamente un carattere "minimalista" o "massimalista"[12]. Il tema è stato affrontato successivamente anche da altri studiosi di fama internazionale, come ad esempio, Larry Diamond e Philippe Schmitter[13]. In sintesi, la concezione minimalista della democrazia fa riferimento al meccanismo elettorale equo e libero, all'esistenza di istituzioni capaci di assicurare un controllo "dal basso" nei confronti dei comportamenti degli eletti e nell'attuazione dei programmi politici presentati. Si tratta, quindi, di una visione "ristretta" della democrazia che certamente poteva ben corrispondere alle esigenze delle società moderne, una volta conclusasi la prima guerra mondiale. A quell'epoca, infatti, la maggior parte della popolazione, nella stessa Europa, era analfabeta; i diritti sociali e civili

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[12] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Harper, New York, 1942.

[13] Larry Diamond, *Defining and Developing Democracy*, in Robert Dahl, Ian Shapiro and Jjsé Antonio. Cheibub (eds.), *The Democracy Sourcebook*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2003; Philippe Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, *What Democracy is…and is not*, in "Journal of Democracy", vol. 2, n. 3, 1991 in https://www.ned.org/docs/Philippe-C-Schmitter-and-Terry-Lynn-Karl-What-Democracy-is-and-Is-Not.pdf.

erano raramente garantiti alle classi sociali più basse; mentre le donne erano per lo più escluse dal diritto di voto, benché movimenti a favore della loro emancipazione avessero cominciato a manifestarsi e ad ottenere primi riconoscimenti.

Alla fine del XX secolo e, in particolare, con il nuovo millennio, il contesto generale si era, però, profondamente modificato. Le procedure democratiche erano diventate assai più sofisticate, andando ben al di là della mera dimensione elettorale. La partecipazione attiva, incoraggiata inizialmente dai partiti di massa, si era estesa alla società civile che, grazie anche all'istruzione di massa e alla televisione, aveva cominciato a svilupparsi autonomamente attraverso reti sempre più complesse sul piano sia organizzativo, sia delle rivendicazioni culturali, economiche, sociali. A ciò ben presto si affiancarono le richieste, sempre più insistenti, di riconoscere lo spazio pubblico come un luogo aperto, fisico o virtuale, capace di assicurare il rispetto dei diritti umani e delle popolazioni indigene, le differenze di genere, il diritto delle minoranze, le libertà degli orientamenti sessuali, la varietà delle religioni e delle loro abitudini alimentari, il rispetto del fine vita. E tutto ciò senza parlare, poi, dell'impatto sempre più incisivo esercitato dall'affermarsi della globalizzazione; dallo sviluppo della medicina, vuoi tramite l'accesso a sistemi sanitari più efficienti e diffusi, vuoi nell'influenzare le scelte genitoriali e di organizzazione della famiglia; dalla diffusione dell'alta formazione (multilingue, interdisciplinare e universitaria) così come dall'apprendimento permanente e personalizzato; dalla mobilità transnazionale individuale, di carriera, formativa, favorita dal moltiplicarsi di programmi co-finanziati, dall'alta velocità, aerei low costs, interconnessioni ad alta tecnologia sempre più potenti e rapide[14]. Tutto ciò ha trasformato radicalmente gli stili di vita e, con essi, l'idea di democrazia, il suo funzionamento e il suo rapporto con la società, mettendo in evidenza approcci neo-nomadici, eterogenei, culturalmente sincretici e in cui la diversità costituisce il fattore caratterizzante del rapporto fra individuo e istituzioni. Tale concezione "massimalista" della democrazia, legata al *diversity management*, è quindi diventata il perno delle sfide cui devono fare

[14] V. Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory. The Portable Rosi Braidotti*, Columbia U. Press, New York, 2011; rinvio anche al mio *Universities as Laboratories. Internationalisation and the Liquidity of National learning*, in Leonidas Donskis, Ida Sabelis, Frans Kamsteeg and Henry Wels (eds.), *Academia in Crisis. The Rise and Risk of Neoliberal Education in Europe*, Brill/Rodhopi, Leiden, 2019, pp. 53-81.

i conti le organizzazioni degli Stati, delle macroregioni, ma perfino del potere locale.

In poche parole, caduto il muro di Berlino, interdipendenza, globalizzazione e inclusività sono diventate sempre più spesso parole-chiave in grado di determinare le caratteristiche delle società più avanzate. E perfino la pandemia da Covid 19 scoppiata a fine 2019, nonostante abbia imposto molte restrizioni, soprattutto alla mobilità, ha messo in evidenza come ricerca scientifica, difesa della salute e cooperazione internazionale siano diventati fattori determinanti del nostro vivere comune.

È inevitabile, pertanto, che anche le società post-socialiste e post-traumatiche che sono succedute alla federazione jugoslava così come, per motivi in parte diversi, il mondo culturale albanese, debbano fare i conti con le sfide del nuovo millennio e non possano restare ancorate ad una cultura ottocentesca dello Stato e della politica. Ciò spiega, in buona misura, perché l'obiettivo di entrare a fare parte dell'UE sia condiviso in questi Paesi e, al tempo stesso, necessiti di un impegno particolarmente incisivo da parte degli stati membri verso l'intera regione adriatico-ionica. Una sorta di duplice attrazione si è innescata fra UE e cosiddetti "Balcani occidentali", tanto più che la prima possiede gli strumenti finanziari e le strategie economico-sociali necessarie a incoraggiare riforme e modernizzazioni da parte delle autorità di una regione in cui, tuttavia, la devastazione, anche violenta, delle istituzioni ha giocato, e continua a giocare, un ruolo primario, ancorché non unico, nel riprodurre meccanismi inadeguati ad affrontare le sfide del momento.

Così, da una parte, tali società si sentono attratte dal grande potenziale finanziario e di investimenti che l'integrazione europea può offrire in termini di crescita economica, ricostruzione del welfare, efficienza infrastrutturale, aspettative di rafforzamento degli standard di vita[15]. Dall'altro, però, esse tendono a concentrarsi e a valorizzare solo questa dimensione del processo di adesione, sottovalutando o marginalizzando l'aspetto politico-culturale che ne costituisce il fondamento. Un aspetto, questo, profondamente connesso con una visione secondo cui integrazione e riconciliazione sono, in larga misura, incompatibili con le dinamiche separatiste, ancora attive, e che hanno condotto alla violenta disgregazione della federazione jugoslava, al ripetuto collasso dello stato albanese e ad

[15] Si v. il mio articolo *Re-examining the International Development Assistance to Southeast Europe: time for a post-functionalist approach?*, in "*Journal of Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*", Vol. 14, n. 3, 2014, pp. 347-365, DOI: 10.1080/14683857.2014.944385.

una serie di insolute questioni di mutuo riconoscimento che riguardano lo spazio culturale albanese, quello jugoslavo e, nello specifico, anche quello macedone.

Di conseguenza, l'intera regione continua a soffrire per le conseguenze dei traumi bellici, per il perpetuarsi di contrasti etno-nazionali, per le eredità culturali derivanti da un isolamento pluridecennale (come quello imposto all'Albania da Enver Hoxha), con inevitabili ripercussioni sulle sue istituzioni, permanentemente fragili, e sulla inefficacia dei sistemi di governance locale. Sono proprio tali fattori, in definitiva, a costituire l'ostacolo più rilevante alla ricostruzione dei frantumati legami regionali, così come al ristabilimento della fiducia nei confronti di istituzioni che, nella maggior parte dei casi, soddisfanno solo formalmente quel "minimalismo" democratico, di cui parlava Schumpeter. Si vanifica così l'effetto positivo che l'attrazione socio-economica della UE pure esercita, tanto nelle aspettative delle popolazioni, quanto nelle aspirazioni manifestate a più riprese dalle autorità dei piccoli paesi balcanici nelle loro dichiarazioni pubbliche.

Non c'è dubbio, infatti, che l'intera impalcatura dell'integrazione europea poggi sul processo di riconciliazione franco-tedesca avviato all'indomani della II guerra mondiale, dopo secoli di conflitti militari fra i due Paesi e sul superamento del conflitto irlandese. La riconciliazione costituisce, infatti, il valore fondante dell'UE e un prerequisito essenziale per la sua realizzazione. I suoi padri fondatori, e in particolare Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Altiero Spinelli e Alcide De Gasperi si spesero generosamente per porre le basi di un futuro di pace e convivenza imperniato in parte sul metodo funzionalista, in parte sui principi federalisti inclusi nel "Manifesto di Ventotene". In ogni caso, l'idea dell'integrazione europea poggia sulla constatazione che gli Stati-Nazione siano portatori di conflitto e che sia necessario un, seppur graduale, superamento di tale forma di Stato[16]. Un'impostazione, questa, che confligge, indubbiamente, con le dinamiche prevalse soprattutto nella federazione jugoslava a partire dalla fine del 1989[17].

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[16] V. Altiero Spinelli, *La crisi degli Stati nazionali*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1991.

[17] Faccio qui in particolare riferimento alla decisione di Milošević di imporre la denuncia di tutti i contratti delle aziende serbe con quelle slovene in seguito alla decisione del governo di Lubiana di proibire una manifestazione di Serbi del Kosovo per il timore di gravi disordini, come già capitato in Montenegro e in Kosovo. La decisione di Milošević, che frantumò il mercato interno jugoslavo, può essere considerata il primo atto formale di

3. *Emulare la UE? I limiti attuali di una prospettiva di pacificazione*

Benché le operazioni militari siano cessate nel 2001, l'animosità nazionalista continua ad esercitare il suo impatto divisivo. Essa deriva da una varietà di motivazioni, in larga parte riconducibili alle differenti, se non opposte, visioni di costruzione dello stato. Le guerre di successione, con i tentativi di ridefinizione dei confini, in contrasto con l'orientamento euro-americano di elevare quelli amministrativo-federali a linee di demarcazione internazionale, ha certamente esercitato un peso rilevante nel consolidare pregiudizi e sospetti reciproci. In aggiunta, l'aspirazione a modificare con la forza il senso di appartenenza ad una comunità politica e, con esso, il senso di cittadinanza e il conseguente accesso ai diritti tramite pulizie etniche, trasferimenti forzati di civili, stupri, massacri sistematici, atti di genocidio, atrocità e crimini commessi in varie aree e in momenti diversi, hanno contribuito a radicare non solo traumi sociali, ma memorie storiche distorte e fondate su vittimizzazione e colpe collettive di lunga durata[18]. Tutto ciò ha avuto un impatto devastante sull'auto-percezione individuale, sull'atteggiamento delle autorità politiche e, in parte, anche degli intellettuali, incoraggiando la costruzione di narrazioni contrastanti e spesso incompatibili sul piano della ricostruzione storica degli eventi, dei dati relativi alle vittime, degli esponenti religiosi, degli obiettivi geopolitici di media e lunga durata[19].

Tutto ciò contribuisce a rendere difficoltosa l'emulazione del processo di integrazione europea nell'area dell'Adriatico e dello Ionio

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disgregazione della federazione. Si v. il mio *Sarajevo, le radici dell'odio*, Edizioni Associate, Roma, 2003 (III ed.), pp. 53-54. Di questa questione già parlai nella I ed. del medesimo libro nel 1993.

[18] Si cfr. al proposito Snježana Koren, Magdalena Agičić-Najbar e Tvrtko Jakovina (eds.), *Dodatak udžbenicima za najnoviju povijest*, Documenta, Zagreb, 2007, in https://documenta.hr/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/jedna_povijest_vise_historija.pdf in cui si ritrova anche parte della documentazione polemica che ha accompagnato questo sforzo di ricostruzione storica al di fuori degli schemi nazionalisti e di parte, con Christina Koulouri et al (eds.), *Teaching Modern and Contemporary Southeast European History: Alternative Educational Materials (voll. 1-6)*, CDRSEE, 2005-2016, in https://fdocuments.in/document/teaching-modern-southeast-european-history-alternative-educational-materials.html.

[19] Cfr. Augusta Dimou, *Transition and Politics of History Education in Southeast Europe*, V&R Unipress Gottingen, 2009 and Leonidas Donskis and Ineta Danasinskiene (eds.), *European Memory. A Blessing or a Curse?*, Longo, Ravenna, 2010.

orientali. Tuttavia, a tale sbocco hanno fornito un apporto significativo anche gli Stati membri della Comunità europea, i quali – nell'euforia della fine degli anni Ottanta, quando il sistema socialista stava per soccombere in tutta Europa – hanno guardato allo Stato jugoslavo esclusivamente come ad una creazione comunista, mancando così di favorire un'evoluzione democratica della sua struttura federale, traendo ispirazione, ad esempio, dall'esperienze della Svizzera, dell'India o del Brasile. Invece, l'Occidente liberal-democratico non è riuscito a liberarsi della sua ottusità ideologica e ha mancato di chiedere libere elezioni pluripartitiche a livello federale, accontentandosi piuttosto delle elezioni svoltesi a livello repubblicano. In ciò esso ha incontrato il favore di tutti i "signori della guerra", dai leader sloveni a quelli croati e serbi. Tutti costoro, infatti, erano impegnati ad enfatizzare la propria legittimazione democratica (avvenuta tramite nuove elezioni locali), in contrasto con un Parlamento e un governo federali, ancora espressione del precedente sistema elettorale delegatario, ma impossibilitati a convocare nuove elezioni perché bloccati dall'ostruzionismo delle tre maggiori repubbliche, giacché era interesse delle loro autorità sostenere quanto le istituzioni federali fossero espressione della cultura politica comunista e, quindi, di un passato da cancellare[20].

La cecità dell'Occidente, come si è detto, derivava in larga misura dalla sua "lettura" ideologica della realtà post-socialista. Ad ulteriore riscontro si pensi quanto la riconciliazione franco-tedesca sia stata fondamentale per superare la memoria delle atrocità commesse durante la II guerra mondiale dai nazisti, dai fascisti e dai loro alleati. Ma all'origine del federalismo jugoslavo, sostenuto dai comunisti locali nel 1943, vi era una preoccupazione simile, dal momento che essi si posero il problema di disegnare, per il periodo postbellico, una forma istituzionale capace di mediare fra i vari gruppi etnici e realizzare un modello di pacificazione fra i popoli slavo-meridionali che stavano vivendo una fase storica segnata da brutalità e violenze inenarrabili, le quali avrebbero potuto innescare una cultura della vendetta, su cui peraltro hanno effettivamente costruito le proprie fortune i leader jugoslavi negli anni Novanta. Che la necessità di

[20] Rinvio al mio "Lessons Not Learned from the Yugoslav Dismemberment and Their Implications for the European Union", in Radhika Mohanram and Anindya Raychaudhuri (eds.), *Partitions and Their Afterlives. Violence, Memories, Living*, Rowman and Littlefield, London and New York, 2019, pp. 83-107.

individuare un contesto istituzionale di conciliazione fra ex nemici fosse una preoccupazione di lungo periodo, già avvertita negli anni successivi alla Grande Guerra, trova ulteriore conferma nelle azioni intraprese da due premi Nobel della pace, il ministro tedesco agli Esteri Gustav Stresemann e il primo ministro francese Aristide Briand. A metà degli anni Venti del XX secolo, infatti, essi furono protagonisti di uno sforzo congiunto, mirato a consolidare la pace nell'Europa Centrale, ma il loro generoso tentativo fallì a causa dell'esacerbarsi dei risentimenti, innestati dal conflitto mondiale e dal modo in cui erano stati disegnati i trattati di pace[21].

Analogamente, i trattati che hanno posto fine alle azioni militari sul territorio jugoslavo fra il 1995 e il 2001 non hanno creato le condizioni per ricostruire un clima di reciproca fiducia, capace di superare i traumi del conflitto e i risentimenti che questo aveva generato. Nonostante l'offerta di un'integrazione nell'UE di tutti gli ex belligeranti, non sono stati compiute azioni decisive sulla strada della ricomposizione delle memorie storiche. Al contrario, letture antitetiche del passato vengono coltivate localmente con grande cura, come conferma l'esistenza delle "due scuole sotto un unico tetto"[22]. Un sistema, questo, molto in voga, soprattutto in Bosnia-Erzegovina, dove gli allievi di gruppi etnici diversi entrano nell'edificio da porte diverse, studiano programmi contrastanti e soprattutto vengono educati secondo parametri di ricostruzione del passato diametralmente opposti, al punto di favorire la riproduzione di stereotipi negativi e di rifiuto dell'altro.

La fragilità della regione nel costruire una prospettiva democratica si scontra anche con meccanismi istituzionali stabiliti dai trattati di pace e che sono fra loro in contraddizione, giacché da un lato disegnano una prospettiva di convivenza e riunificazione, ma dall'altro favoriscono forme di decentramento etnico che obbediscono alla logica culturale in base alla quale sono stati perseguiti gli obiettivi di guerra dalle parti in causa. Non è un caso, del resto, che – in tali condizioni – quasi tutti i confini fra gli stati successori della Jugoslavia non siano ancora stati

[21] Per una valutazione comparata dei principali trattati di pace si v. Stefano Bianchini, Joseph Marko, Craig Nation and Milica Uvalić (eds.), *Regional Cooperation, Peace Enforcement, and the Role of the Treaties in the Balkans*, Longo, Ravenna, 2007.

[22] *"Two Schools Under One Roof" - The Most Visible Example of Discrimination in Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, OSCE Mission of Bosnia-Herzegovina, November 2018, in https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/8/404990.pdf.

ratificati dai reciproci parlamenti ad oltre vent'anni dalla firma dei trattati di pace. L'unico confine ratificato è quello fra Montenegro e Kosovo, benché *Vetëvendosje!*, ossia il partito kosovaro di maggioranza – che è destinato a tornare al governo dopo il voto del 2021 – ha esplicitamente detto di volerlo rinegoziare perché in disaccordo con i suoi contenuti. I due paesi jugoslavi entrati a far parte dell'UE, ossia Slovenia e Croazia, si contestano ancora pochi chilometri quadrati nella baia di Salvore/Savudrija con le sue ripercussioni sulla definizione delle acque territoriali nel Golfo di Trieste. Croazia e Bosnia avevano firmato un accordo sui confini ai tempi di Tuđman e Izetbegović, ma tale accordo non ha trovato ancora conferma parlamentare. Aperti sono rimasti anche alcuni confini fra Croazia e Montenegro, nonché fra Croazia e Serbia, soprattutto laddove le piene primaverili e le inondazioni del Danubio provocano spostamenti del corso del fiume con riverberi sulle competenze territoriali dei due Paesi.

Si dirà che, tutto sommato, si tratta di aree delimitate, che potrebbero assimilarsi alla contestazione spagnola nei confronti della Gran Bretagna per Gibilterra, ma nel caso jugoslavo emozioni e risentimenti sono ancora vivi e ben alimentati dai sistemi politici e dalle organizzazioni religiose. Basti solo pensare, in questo caso, al conflitto insorto fra la chiesa ortodossa serba e quella montenegrina, che ha tanto avvelenato gli animi negli ultimi anni (e questo senza entrare nel merito dei lasciti, ancora vivi, dei rapporti cattolico-ortodossi, o ortodosso-musulmani, rispettivamente in Croazia e Bosnia-Erzegovina). Né si può dimenticare come sia tuttora diffuso il trauma della frantumazione culturale (e politica) albanese imposta nel 1912-13, e quanto questa ancora eserciti un suo peso sul futuro del Kosovo e degli stessi Albanesi della Macedonia del Nord.

Esiste un ulteriore, importante elemento, che contribuisce a rendere complesso e tormentato il processo di riconciliazione nello spazio culturale jugoslavo: nessuno fra gli ex belligeranti si considera militarmente sconfitto dai conflitti militari del 1991-2001. Si tratta di una radicale, e significativa, differenza rispetto al caso franco-tedesco, il cui processo di riconciliazione ha potuto svilupparsi grazie al riconoscimento, privo di incertezze, delle responsabilità tedesche da parte del governo di Berlino. Al contrario, questa non è affatto la situazione cui popoli e governi degli Stati successori della Jugoslavia fanno riferimento ogni qualvolta interrogano il proprio recente passato, sicché le animosità continuano ad essere percepite anche quando vengono apparentemente accantonate.

Conclusioni

In questo quadro, non costituisce un fattore incoraggiante il crescente scetticismo dimostrato dagli stati membri dell'UE nei confronti dei (relativi) progressi riformatori compiuti dai paesi candidati del Sud-Est europeo o da quelli che coltivano la speranza di avviare a breve i negoziati di adesione. La "fatica europea" tanto evidenziata dopo l'ingresso di Bulgaria e Romania nel 2007 e percepita soprattutto in Francia, Olanda e altri Paesi del Nord-Europa, non costituisce uno stimolo convincente per élite politiche a loro volta sempre più recalcitranti ad adottare le misure legislative, economiche e giudiziarie richieste dall'UE. Il tentativo di favorire la crescita di un mercato regionale, capace di competere in prospettiva con quello della UE, come raccomanda il secondo criterio di Copenaghen, si è tradotto in un "trasferimento" verso Sud-Est del CEFTA, ossia dell'accordo commerciale attivato a suo tempo dai paesi di Visegrád. E pur tuttavia, esso funziona solo in parte, vuoi perché in origine in Croazia si è diffuso il timore che si trattasse di un "subdolo tentativo" della UE vòlto a ricostruire uno spazio economico jugoslavo (trovando una sorta di conferma nello studio dedicato da Tim Judah sulla costituzione di una "Jugosfera"), vuoi perché il Kosovo ha applicato tariffe doganali esorbitanti sui prodotti serbi come forma di pressione nei confronti di Belgrado affinché il suo governo ne riconoscesse l'indipendenza[23].

La crisi del debito sovrano del 2008, seguita da quella migratoria a partire dal 2015 con le varie rotte balcaniche che si sono venute costituendo, la politica europea di esternalizzazione dei propri confini e il trasferimento di fondi europei verso i Paesi limitrofi all'Unione, con l'aumento della corruzione locale, hanno costituito ulteriori elementi che non hanno favorito la ricostruzione economica e sociale della regione, né un ricupero – in forme nuove – di legami transnazionali con una graduale attenuazione dei risentimenti nazionali. Recente è anche l'aspra polemica delle accademie di Croazia e Serbia contro l'iniziativa, firmata da migliaia di intellettuali jugoslavi, a sostegno di una interpretazione multipolare della lingua comune "serbo-croata-bosniaco-montenegrina", promossa da una coraggiosa sociolinguista, Snježana Kordić, e interpretata, invece, dalle correnti nazionaliste come un tentativo di negare le lingue nazionali sorte

[23] Tim Judah, *Yugoslavia is dead, long life the Yugosphere*, LSEE, London, 2009 in https://www.lse.ac.uk/LSEE-Research-on-South-Eastern-Europe/Assets/Documents/Publications/Paper-Series-on-SEE/Yugosphere.pdf.

dalle ceneri del "serbo-croato"[24]. Era inevitabile, in un certo senso, che il perpetuarsi di un'atmosfera di (latente) confronto lasciasse poco spazio a politiche di investimento, innovazione e crescita. Sicché, di fronte al perdurare di un contesto incapace di offrire un futuro credibile, prospettive di lavoro e benessere, soprattutto le giovani generazioni si siano sentite incoraggiate ad abbandonare i propri paesi, accrescendo la fuga dei cervelli, lasciando agli anziani le aree rurali, a loro volta progressivamente abbandonate per ragioni demografiche, con un conseguente, severo impatto sulla coesione territoriale[25].

Eppure gli interventi internazionali non sono mancati, soprattutto sul piano della cooperazione regionale. Si può anzi essere stupiti della quantità di istituzioni che sono state attivate nella regione. Basti qui solo menzionare l'Iniziativa Centro-Europea (InCE), la più antica organizzazione interstatale, costituita nell'autunno del 1989 su iniziativa di Italia, Jugoslavia, Austria e Ungheria, allora con il nome di "Quadrangolare". Successivamente, si sono aggiunte altre associazioni internazionali come l'Iniziativa Adriatica, poi diventata Iniziativa Adriatico-Ionica (IAI), l'Euroregione Adriatica, il Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), il South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP), la Black Sea Cooperation Organization (BSEC) e la Macroregione Adriatico-Ionica (EUSAIR) e perfino il RECOM, un network regionale di organizzazioni della società civile attivamente impegnato proprio sul tema della riconciliazione[26].

Insieme, o separatamente, esse hanno stimolato, sotto diversi profili, una ricostruzione dei legami sociali, culturali, economici, promuovendo numerosi progetti che hanno avuto anche successo, ma che spesso sono rimasti privi di quella forza di disseminazione che la UE si riprometteva. L'ostacolo principale restava, e resta, costituito dalla

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[24] Cfr. Snježana Kordić, *Jezik i nacionalizam*, Durieux, Zagreb, 2010 e l'iniziativa *Declaration on the Common Language*, in https://www.literaturhauseuropa.eu/en/topics/articles/declaration-on-the-common-language.

[25] V. Stefano Bianchini, Marco Zoppi et al., *MIGRATUP - Territorial and Urban Potentials Connected to Migration and Refugee Flows*, ESPON targeted analysis, 2018 in https://www.espon.eu/migration.

[26] Su RECOM si v. il sito https://www.recom.link/. V. anche Duško Lopandić I Jasminka Kronja, *Regionalne inicijative i multilateralna saradnja na Balkanu, Evropski pokret Srbija*, Beograd, 2010; Erhard Busek (ed.), *10 years Southeast European Cooperation Initiative*, Springer, Wien, 2006.

resistenza delle istituzioni statali locali, ancora troppo timorose di vedere messi in discussione quegli spazi, ancorché limitati, di potere che si erano venuti costituendo dopo i conflitti degli anni Novanta e spesso grazie a quelli.

Al tempo stesso, però, alcune promettenti attività si sforzano di promuovere un cambiamento reale: nell'ambito della macroregione adriatico-ionica, ad esempio, si sono di recente rafforzate le reti delle Università (tramite l'associazione Uniadrion) così come quelle dei due fora delle municipalità e delle camere di commercio. Le loro convergenze hanno moltiplicato le attività di rete, rendendo possibile una cooperazione transnazionale di una pluralità di soggetti culturali, formativi, amministrativi e politici su temi che non riguardano solo ambiente, trasporti, turismo ed economia blu, ma anche la governance macroregionale e lo sviluppo di PMI. A ciò si è aggiunta, nel 2019, l'iniziativa promossa dai governi di Serbia, Albania e Macedonia del Nord, definita mini-Schengen. Nelle intenzioni, essa mira non solo a coinvolgere tutti i paesi della regione, incluso il Kosovo, ma soprattutto a favorire la costituzione di un'area di libero mercato in grado di attuare le "quattro libertà" dell'Unione Europea e rafforzare la capacità competitiva delle economie degli Stati coinvolti, in modo da prefigurare un più efficace consolidamento, in vista di una integrazione nell'UE che, nonostante tutto, resta l'obiettivo prioritario di questi Paesi.

Come si dice in Italia: "se, poi, son rose, fioriranno", benché le spine siano ancora ben acuminate.

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DISINTEGRAZIONE, DE-INTEGRAZIONE, INTEGRAZIONE DIFFERENZIATA O ALLARGAMENTO PER L'UNIONE EUROPEA POST-COVID 19?

Roberto Di Quirico

Fin dalla fine degli anni Duemila ed ancor più con la crisi dell'Eurozona dei primi anni Dieci, si è aperto un dibattito a vari livelli sulle sfide e i possibili sbocchi e soluzioni di una più generale crisi del processo integrativo in Europa e delle palesi incongruenze della struttura istituzionale e di governance dell'Unione europea (Ue). A tali sfide si è poi aggiunta quella ancor più temibile della pandemia che dal 2020 affligge l'intera umanità e che non mancherà d'influenzare in modo determinante il futuro dell'Unione europea.

Le sfide che si pongono all'integrazione europea e alla sua massima realizzazione che è l'Unione europea sicuramente influenzeranno scelte su questioni non direttamente collegate alla loro soluzione, ma funzionali all'obbiettivo generale del consolidamento della struttura sovranazionale dell'Europa contemporanea, non ultime le scelte relative all'allargamento dell'Unione europea ai paesi dei Balcani occidentali ed eventualmente alla Moldova, cioè quei paesi che sono immediatamente confinanti con l'Unione europea e ad essa sono fortemente legati da interessi economici.

I possibili sbocchi e le soluzioni praticabili vanno distinti in base alla natura delle loro origini, intendendo per sbocchi le conseguenze imprevedibili o ineluttabili della crisi e per soluzioni quelle scelte politiche volte a perseguire specifici obbiettivi, in particolare il consolidamento o almeno la sopravvivenza della struttura sovranazionale europea che più volte è apparsa a rischio dissoluzione.

In questo breve saggio descriveremo queste sfide, introdurremo gli sbocchi più probabili e le possibili soluzioni riflettendo infine su come l'evolversi della situazione e le conseguenze delle scelte politiche e dei loro esiti influenzeranno le possibilità di allargamento dell'Unione europea ai territori ad essa vicini.

1 – Le sfide

Tra le principali sfide che l'Unione europea ha dovuto e deve tuttora affrontare ve ne sono alcune che hanno una natura ben definita e identificabile con specifici eventi, mentre altre hanno un carattere più generale che emerge in una molteplicità di eventi tra loro collegabili.

Un esempio, se non l'esempio per eccellenza, del primo tipo di sfide è costituito dalla cosiddetta Brexit, cioè dall'uscita del Regno unito dall'Unione europea[1]. Tale uscita, oltre a costituire un impoverimento economico e territoriale dell'Unione europea, ha anche contribuito a dimostrare la fattibilità di una scelta a lungo ritenuta improbabile se non impossibile e che è entrata nel dibattito politico come un'opzione da prendere in considerazione, perlomeno a livello nazionale, per affrontare i problemi di stagnazione economica e di marginalità politica che affliggono alcuni paesi membri sia dal lato dei paesi in difficoltà, sia da quello dei paesi che rischiano di doversi accollare una parte dei costi causati dai problemi dei primi[2].

La Brexit ha anche reso più pressante un'altra delle grandi sfide all'integrazione negli anni Dieci, cioè il montante antieuropeismo ed in particolare l'antieuropeismo populista che ha visto nella Brexit il fallimento dell'integrazione ed il principio della disintegrazione dell'Unione europea facendo addirittura di quest'ultimo processo un obiettivo politico da perseguire in toto o in parte[3]. La sfida populista antieuropeista non è stata

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[1] Sulla Brexit v. Andrew Glencross, *Why the UK Voted for Brexit. David Cameron's Great Miscalculation*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016; Patrick Diamond, Peter Nedergaard e Ben Rosamond (a cura di), *Routledge Handbook of the Politics of Brexit*, London/New York: Routledge, 2018; David Ramiro Troitiño, Tanel Kerikmäe e Archil Chochia, *Brexit: History, Reasoning and Perspectives*, New York: Springer International Publishing, 2018; Roberto Di Quirico, "The Road to Brexit. European Integration, the UK, and the failure of the "Malign Neglect" Strategy Toward the EU", in Annette Bongardt, Leila Simona Talani e Francisco Torres (a cura di), *The Politics and Economics of Brexit*, Cheltenham Glos (UK): E. Elgar, 2020, pp. 38-55.

[2] Oltre all'annosa questione della redistribuzione dei costi della politica di coesione tra paesi membri beneficiari netti e contributori netti del bilancio dell'Unione europea, si è posto nel recente passato il problema delle ricadute delle politiche economiche nazionali sui bilanci degli altri paesi membri e la questione del supporto della Banca centrale europea alle politiche di bilancio dei paesi membri maggiormente in difficoltà sia sotto forma di acquisto dei titoli pubblici sul mercato secondario, sia attraverso forme d'indebitamento comune talvolta chiamati Eurobond.

[3] V. Ronald Inglehart e Pippa Norris, *Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash*, Harvard: Kennedy School, 2016.

limitata al livello ideologico o di prospettive di policy, ma è giunta ad influenzare le scelte politiche di alcuni paesi in cui i populisti hanno guadagnato il potere o sono divenuti importanti per gli equilibri di governo[4]. La pandemia ha forzatamente attenuato le pulsioni antieuropeiste nel momento in cui l'Unione europea è risultata indispensabile e unica nel garantire una risposta finanziaria e organizzativa adeguata alla crisi pandemica. Non vi però alcuna certezza che questa esperienza basti a sopire definitivamente l'antieuropeismo che invece potrebbe risorgere una volta che all'emozione del momento e alla lotta alla pandemia si sostituirà l'inevitabile crisi economica e la necessità di reintrodurre gli strumenti di governance economica e di bilancio previsti dai trattati[5].

Del resto, se la pandemia ha rafforzato il ruolo di coordinamento dell'Unione europea, le scelte che si sono rese necessarie hanno evidenziato fratture tra i paesi membri della Ue che erano già abbastanza evidenti in passato, ma che si sono esacerbate quando si è trattato di decidere le

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[4] Sul caso italiano v. Roberto Di Quirico, "Challenging the Euro: The politics of anti-Euro parties in Italy during the first Conte government", in *Contemporary Italian Politics*, DOI:10.1080/23248823.2020.179 3073, Published online 24 Jul 2020. Sulla situazione in Ungheria v. András Körösényi e Veronika Patkós, "Variations for Inspirational Leadership: The Incumbency of Berlusconi and Orbán", in *Parliamentary Affairs*, vol. 70 (2017), no. 3, pp. 611–632; Péter Krekó e Zsolt Enyedi, "Explaining Eastern Europe: Orbán's Laboratory of Illiberalism", in *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 29 (2018), no. 3, pp. 39-51.

[5] Su antieuropeismo, populismo e la relazione esistente con la crisi economica v. Paul A. Taggart e Aleks Szczerbiak, *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008; Fabio Serricchio, Myrto Tsakatika e Lucia Quaglia, "Euroscepticism and the global financial crisis", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 51 (2013), no. 1, pp. 51–64; Hanspeter Kriesi "The Populist Challenge", in *West European Politics*, vol. 37 (2014), no. 2, pp. 361-378; Hanspeter Kriesi e Takis Pappas (a cura di), *European populism in the shadow of the great recession*, Colchester: ECPR Press, 2015; Roberto Di Quirico, *Crisi dell'euro e crisi dell'Europa. La nuova governance economica europea e il futuro dell'integrazione*, Roma: Carocci, 2016; Maria Elisabetta Lanzone, Gilles Ivaldi e Dwayne Woods, "Varieties of Populism across a Left-Right Spectrum: The Case of the Front National, the Northern League, Podemos and Five Star Movement", in *Swiss Political Science Review*, Special Issue on 'Populist Mobilization Across Time and Space', vol. 23 (2017), no. 4, pp. 354-376; Stephan De Spiegeleire, Clarissa Skinner e Tim Sweijs, *The rise of populist sovereignism: What it is, where it come from, and what it means for international security and defence*, The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2017; Catherine E. De Vries, *Euroscepticism and the Future of European Integration*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018; Roberto Di Quirico, *A Europe Apart. History and Politics of European Monetary Integration*, Firenze: European Press Academic Publishing, 2020.

misure economiche da adottare, la distribuzione dei costi da sopportare e il tipo di adeguamenti della struttura e degli strumenti di governance necessari per fronteggiare la crisi pandemica. Inoltre, la crisi pandemica ha probabilmente favorito un processo d'impoverimento della democrazia e di degenerazione autoritaria in alcuni paesi in atto ormai da tempo e che aveva già causato tensioni e divisioni all'interno dell'Unione europea, in particolare tra paesi membri dell'Europa occidentale ed il cosiddetto gruppo di Visegrád[6].

Il caso della negoziazione del bilancio 2021-2027 dell'Unione europea e del cosiddetto Recovery Plan ha messo in evidenza la natura e la gravità di queste due fratture all'interno dell'Ue[7], l'una verticale (cioè Nord-Sud) tra i cosiddetti "paesi frugali"(Olanda, Austria, Svezia, Danimarca, Finlandia) ed i paesi mediterranei e l'altra orizzontale (Centroccidentale-Centrorientale) tra le maggiori democrazie europee e i paesi in cui la democrazia è stata minata da governi nazionalisti e sovranisti (in particolare Ungheria e Polonia) ostili ad ulteriori cessioni di sovranità all'Unione europea e alle richieste di rispetto delle libertà democratiche e delle decisioni comuni (per esempio in tema di riallocazione dei migranti) formulate dalla Commissione europea. In quell'occasione tali fratture sono emerse in modo netto sia sulla questione delle modalità d'intervento finanziario a favore dei paesi maggiormente colpiti dalla pandemia, sia in termini di potere di veto esercitato dai paesi a maggior rischio autoritario.

2 – Sbocchi, soluzioni e futuro dell'Unione europea

Le conseguenze dei fattori di crisi evidenziatisi nell'Unione europea degli anni Dieci e poi amplificati a causa della pandemia possono derivare sia dall'incapacità delle istituzioni europee e dei paesi membri di gestire la

[6] Il Gruppo di Visegrád è una forma di coordinamento politico tra paesi che, pur essendo membri dell'Unione europea, perseguono obbiettivi comuni fin dal 1991. Il gruppo include Polonia, Repubblica Ceca, Slovacchia e Ungheria, paesi che si sono dimostrati critici nei confronti della politica dell'Ue in varie occasioni.

[7] La NextGenerationEU (detta talvolta Recovery Fund o Recovery Plan) è un'iniziativa dell'Unione europea volta a favorire la ripresa economica nei paesi membri dopo la pandemia di COVID 19 attraverso finanziamenti raccolti direttamente con la garanzia comunitaria e redistribuiti tra i paesi membri per l'attuazione di politiche economiche e di sviluppo concentrate in settori prioritari definiti dal piano. Il totale dei fondi messi a disposizione ammonta a 1800 miliardi di euro. V. https://ec.europa.eu/ info/strategy/ recovery-plan-europe_it.

crisi complessiva dell'Unione europea, sia dalla capacità e dal successo nell'implementare specifiche scelte atte a risolvere i maggiori problemi, fermo restando che il maggior fattore erratico è proprio la pandemia che sembra essere arrivata nel momento di maggior perdita di consenso per l'Ue e giocare a favore di una sua rilegittimazione come strumento cruciale di coordinamento economico e finanziario del sub-continente europeo. Ovviamente, niente impedisce che sbocchi e soluzioni coincidano almeno parzialmente e che processi attivatisi autonomamente e amplificati da scelte politiche specifiche contribuiscano a risolvere i problemi stessi che li hanno generati.

Tra i possibili sbocchi della crisi complessiva dell'Unione europea il più temibile è la disintegrazione dell'Ue stessa. Anche in questo caso, c'è però da distinguere tra volontarietà e ineluttabilità del processo così come da tenere in considerazione l'intensità dello stesso. Infatti, la disintegrazione dell'Unione europea potrebbe essere totale o parziale e in ambedue i casi potrebbe essere il risultato di scelte politiche e non semplicemente di un collasso della struttura[8].

La disintegrazione, perlomeno parziale, dell'Unione europea è stata a lungo un obbiettivo dei partiti di estrema destra e dei partiti sovranisti che proponevano il ritorno agli stati nazionali e lo smantellamento totale o parziale della struttura sovranazionale. L'introduzione nel trattato di Lisbona della possibilità di recedere dall'Unione europea e la Brexit hanno reso l'uscita dall'Ue una opzione praticabile facendone una scelta di policy realistica[9], soprattutto per quei paesi maggiormente in difficoltà per la crisi dell'Eurozona (per esempio Grecia e Italia) o per l'avvento al potere di partiti antieuropei. La crisi pandemica, le drammatiche necessità finanziarie di gran parte dei paesi membri dell'Ue e la sospensione dei vincoli di bilancio hanno di molto attenuato le spinte alla disintegrazione,

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[8] Sulla questione della disintegrazione dell'Unione europea v. Douglas Webber, "How Likely is it that the European Union will Disintegrate? A Critical Analysis of Competing Theoretical Perspectives", in *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 20 (2014), no. 2, pp. 341–365; Philippe C. Schmitter e Zoe Lefkofridi "Neo-Functionalism as a Theory of Disintegration", in *Chinese Political Science Review*, vol. 1 (2016), no. 1, pp. 1–29; Christopher Lord, "The Legitimacy of Exits from the European Union", in *Journal of European Integration*, vol. 39 (2017), no. 5, pp. 499–513; Hans Vollaard, *European Disintegration: A Search for Explanations*, London: Palgrave Macmillan (2018); Eric Jones, "Towards a Theory of Disintegration", in *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 25 (2018), no. 3, pp. 440–451.

[9] V. Frank Schimmelfennig, "Brexit: Differentiated Disintegration in the European Union", in *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 25 (2018), no 8, pp. 1154-1173.

sia in termini di scelte politiche, sia come conseguenza dell'instabilità sistemica, ma è piuttosto probabile che una volta superato il periodo di diffusione della pandemia, le condizioni che avevano alimentato in passato le spinte verso la disintegrazione si ripresenteranno più forti che mai.

Un'altra possibilità è costituita dalla de-integrazione dell'Unione europea. Questa potrebbe assumere la forma di una parziale riduzione delle competenze assegnate all'Unione europea con conseguente ritorno di sovranità agli stati nazionali che l'avevano a suo tempo ceduta al livello sovranazionale. In alternativa, anche il mantenimento delle competenze dell'Ue ma su un numero di paesi minore potrebbe essere considerata una forma di de-integrazione (invece che di disintegrazione parziale) se tale riduzione dei paesi membri non riducesse significativamente le capacità operative e di ulteriore integrazione dell'Unione europea nella sua nuova conformazione. Il caso della Brexit, più che fare da apripista alla disintegrazione dell'Ue, sembra al momento più che altro una forma di de-integrazione. Questa potrebbe diventare addirittura una opportunità politica qualora si attuassero, come recentemente prospettato, delle strategie di marginalizzazione contro paesi membri problematici, tanto da favorirne la fuoriuscita[10]. Teoricamente questa forma di de-integrazione pilotata potrebbe spingersi fino alla graduale estinzione dei paesi membri attualmente al di fuori dell'Eurozona costringendo alcuni ad aderirvi e spingendo gli altri al di fuori della Ue.

Una forma più soft di quest'ultima evoluzione è l'integrazione differenziata, peraltro già prevista dai trattati sotto forma di cooperazione rafforzata tra paesi membri[11]. Tale opzione, già utilizzata in passato per la

[10] Durante i negoziati per l'approvazione del budget 2021-2027 dell'Unione europea, di fronte all'ostruzionismo di un piccolo gruppo di paesi che contestavano la condizionalità che avrebbe dovuto legare il pagamento dei fondi al rispetto dei principi democratici nei paesi beneficiari è stata prospettata la possibilità di procedere senza l'assenso di questi paesi adottando una strategia di marginalizzazione dei suddetti paesi che li avrebbe sospinti verso l'isolamento se non verso l'uscita dall'Unione europea.

[11] Sull'integrazione differenziata v. Alkuin Kölliker, "Bringing together or driving apart the Union? Towards a theory of differentiated integration", in *West European Politics*, vol. 24 (2001), no 4, pp. 125–51; Benjamin Leruth e Christopher Lord, "Differentiated integration in the European Union: a concept, a process, a system or a theory?", *in Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 22 (2015), no. 6, pp. 754-76; Frank Schimmelfennig, Dirk Leuffen e Berthold Rittberger, "The European Union as a system of differentiated integration: interdependence, politicization and differentiation", in *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 22 (2015), no 6, pp. 764-782; Kenneth Dyson e Angelos Sepos (a cura di), *Which Europe? The politics of differentiated integration*, London: Palgrave, 2016.

cooperazione militare, e talvolta identificata con casi o progetti di Europa a due velocità[12], in realtà già trova una piena applicazione nella divisione tra paesi membri che fanno parte dell'Eurozona e paesi che, pur essendo membri dell'Ue, utilizzano ancora le loro monete nazionali. L'Europa "*a la charte*" sarebbe una forma estrema d'integrazione differenziata, peraltro ritenuta di difficile applicazione[13], in cui ogni paese membro sceglie se adottare o no le nuove policy dell'Ue, quindi se cedere o no sovranità in un certo settore di policy. In questo caso, l'integrazione europea avverrebbe su diversi livelli e a diverse velocità, fermo restando che sarebbe difficile se non impossibile utilizzare in modo continuo questo metodo pena l'ingestibilità del sistema, soprattutto nel caso in cui il livello d'integrazione dovesse esser già tanto avanzato da richiedere l'adozione delle nuove misure da parte di tutti i paesi membri già profondamente integrati come nel caso dei paesi dell'Eurozona.

L'ultima categoria di trasformazioni che l'Unione europea potrebbe sperimentare fin da ora e come conseguenza e risposta alla pandemia consiste nella riforma dei suoi obbiettivi e delle sue politiche, cosa che comporterebbe anche una profonda revisione del sistema di governance dell'Ue. Da parecchio tempo si parla di riforme in termini di modalità di voto nel Consiglio (soprattutto pensando all'abolizione del voto all'unanimità nei casi in cui è ancora previsto) oppure di riforme drastiche della governance economica e dei vincoli di budget che ne costituiscono la base. Anche l'introduzione di nuove competenze e nuove forme di cessione di sovranità sono state previste in campi quali il controllo dei confini e la gestione dei flussi migratori oppure nella gestione della sanità e della prevenzione delle malattie, cioè in settori in cui si è recentemente evidenziata una necessità ancora insoddisfatta di coordinamento a livello europeo. Questo tipo di trasformazione può risultare ambigua in termini d'impatto sull'integrazione in quanto può andare nel senso di una maggiore o di una minore integrazione come anche di una certa ambiguità creata dalla coesistenza di misure con impatto opposto sull'avanzamento dell'integrazione.

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[12] V. Kenneth Dyson e Kevin Featherstone, *The Road To Maastricht: Negotiating Economic and Monetary Union*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; Jean-Claude Piris, *The future of Europe: towards a two-speed EU?*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

[13] V. European Commission, *EU à la carte?*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016.

3 – Le prospettive d'allargamento dell'Unione europea post-COVID 19

Le trasformazioni che l'Unione europea potrebbe affrontare nel periodo post-COVID 19 e discusse finora sono riassunte nella seguente tabella con una valutazione del tutto approssimativa delle possibilità che si concretizzino nel periodo immediatamente seguente alla fine della pandemia. Tale valutazione è basata su un'analisi supportata da vari studi in parte citati nelle note di questo capitolo e a cui si rimanda.

Tabella 1. Trasformazioni e conseguenze sull'Unione europea possibili nel medio periodo.

Trasformazione	*Conseguenze*	*Probabilità*
Disintegrazione totale	Scomparsa dell'Unione europea	Improbabile
Disintegrazione parziale	Riduzione del numero dei paesi membri e delle funzioni delegate all'Unione europea	Possibile, ma non probabile e limitata a pochi paesi
De-integrazione funzionale	Riduzione delle competenze dell'Unione europea e dei vincoli derivanti dall'integrazione	Poco probabile
De-integrazione territoriale	Riduzione dei paesi membri dell'Unione europea	Possibile, ma non molto probabile
Integrazione differenziata	Differenziazione dei livelli d'integrazione ed Europa a più velocità	Probabile
Europa *a la charte*	Differenziazione dei livelli d'integrazione	Poco probabile, e in misura limitata
Riforme con aumento integrazione	Aumento del livello d'integrazione complessivo, delle funzioni dell'Unione europea e dei vincoli a carico dei paesi membri	Molto probabile, soprattutto per i paesi dell'Eurozona
Riforme	Riduzione del livello	Possibile,

con riduzione integrazione	d'integrazione complessivo, delle funzioni dell'Unione europea e dei vincoli a carico dei paesi membri.	ma non probabile e solo per alcuni specifici aspetti o paesi

Qualora alcune di queste trasformazioni dovessero effettivamente realizzarsi, le scelte di policy dei paesi membri e dell'intera Unione europea ne sarebbero profondamente influenzate, soprattutto in tema di allargamento dell'Unione europea stessa. Al momento ci sono alcuni paesi nei Balcani occidentali interessati all'ammissione nell'Unione europea a cui si aggiunge la Moldova, che da decenni ambisce alla membership. Le condizioni per il soddisfacimento di tali ambizioni dipenderanno molto da come l'Unione europea emergerà dalla crisi post-COVID 19 e dai processi che si attiveranno in tema di evoluzione della struttura comunitaria.

Se dovessero attivarsi processi di disintegrazione dell'Unione europea le possibilità di allargamento ai paesi vicini sarebbero ovviamente nulle in caso di disintegrazione totale ed estremamente ridotte in caso di disintegrazione parziale. Infatti anche se la disintegrazione fosse solo parziale, la diminuzione di risorse disponibili qualora uscissero paesi contributori netti o la frammentazione territoriale che potrebbe derivarne se uscissero paesi periferici dell'Europa Centrorientale, renderebbe insostenibile o inopportuno l'allargamento a paesi che necessiterebbero di supporto finanziario e resterebbero comunque separati o remoti nei confronti del resto dell'Unione europea.

Se invece dovessero attivarsi processi di de-integrazione, le possibilità di allargamento potrebbero essere maggiori, soprattutto se la de-integrazione fosse di natura funzionale in quanto rimarrebbe la convenienza ad ammettere paesi che aumenterebbero la contiguità geografica dei paesi già membri e favorirebbero l'ambizione dell'Ue di coprire l'intera area continentale europea. I vantaggi dell'ampliamento del mercato e l'eventuale riduzione nella redistribuzione dei fondi comunitari che potrebbe risultare dalla de-integrazione funzionale renderebbero così sostenibile un eventuale allargamento.

Le conseguenze sulle possibilità di allargamento dell'Ue di una eventuale prevalenza delle strategie d'integrazione differenziata sono difficilmente prevedibili perché strettamente dipendenti dalle modalità di realizzazione di tale forma d'integrazione. Sicuramente l'integrazione differenziata nelle sue forme più complesse aumenterebbe la

frammentazione della governance europea e renderebbe sconsigliabili allargamenti che aggraverebbero tale frammentazione. Se invece prevalessero forme d'integrazione differenziata "bipolare" (ad esempio la differenziazione tra paesi che adottano l'euro e paesi che non lo adottano) le possibilità di assistere ad allargamenti dell'Unione europea aumenterebbero, tanto più se tale forma d'integrazione differenziata dovesse comportare una redistribuzione delle risorse comunitarie e delle opportunità di finanziamento a favore dell'area più integrata rendendo così meno costosa l'ammissione di nuovi paesi membri.

Infine, se le trasformazioni dell'Unione europea post-COVID 19 dovessero verificarsi soprattutto attraverso la riforma di obbiettivi e politiche europee, questo potrebbe rendere inopportuni gli allargamenti soprattutto se tali riforme dovessero puntare (com'è probabile) al rafforzamento di politiche comuni di sostegno e coordinamento oltre che a finanziare politiche di ripresa economica nei paesi più danneggiati dalla pandemia, come in effetti sta accadendo con il Recovery Plan. Infatti, la necessità di concentrare risorse finanziarie e obbiettivi di policy sui paesi membri in difficoltà sconsiglierebbero di sovraccaricare la struttura comunitaria ammettendo nuovi paesi membri che assorbirebbero risorse finanziarie e porterebbero poco in termini di ampliamento dei mercati o di rafforzamento dell'Unione europea. Se però dovessero prender piede riforme atte a garantire una capacità autonoma della Commissione di emettere debito comune e di procurarsi risorse finanziarie e se specifiche politiche quali quelle del contenimento dei flussi migratori dovessero rendere i paesi attualmente confinanti con l'Unione europea cruciali per l'attuazione di queste politiche, le possibilità di ammissione potrebbero aumentare, perlomeno nel medio periodo e comunque dopo il superamento dell'inevitabile crisi economica che seguirà la fine della pandemia.

4 – Conclusioni

La crisi causata dalla pandemia di COVID 19 si è aggiunta ad un complesso di fattori critici che già dalla fine degli anni Duemila sconsigliavano l'allargamento dell'Unione europea a quei paesi confinanti interessati alla membership. In alcuni campi la pandemia ha di molto aggravato i fattori di crisi esistenti, ma ha al contempo fornito stimoli ad adottare soluzioni di ampio respiro che potrebbero facilitare il rilancio dell'Ue una volta superata la crisi pandemica. Dal modo in cui saranno

affrontati i problemi nel periodo seguente la fine della pandemia dipendono anche le possibilità di ammissione nell'Unione europea dei paesi dei Balcani occidentali e della Moldova. Dall'analisi, pur sommaria, dei possibili scenari proposto in questo saggio possiamo dedurre che tali prospettive di ammissione restano modeste, tanto più se riferite al breve periodo. Questo non dipende tanto dai rischi di disintegrazione dell'Unione europea che erano emersi negli anni Dieci, quanto dalle necessità di riorganizzazione e finanziarie dell'Ue che seguiranno la fine della pandemia e che rendono sconsigliabile aumentare la frammentazione e l'impegno finanziario dell'Unione europea, come invece accadrebbe in caso di allargamento a nuovi paesi membri.

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The Role of the Albanian Community in the European Integration Process of North Macedonia

Mircea Brie, Islam Jusufi, István Polgár

1. Introduction and methodology

The fall of communism and the disintegration of Yugoslavia have amplified –in a first stage-the process of identity emancipation and the emergence of new cleavages in the Balkans. Against the background of conflicts and the desire for socio-economic development, the societies of the new Balkan states have repositioned themselves in favor of a reconciling identity dialogue. This process has also been favored by the aspirations for European integration that these peoples have. Today, most states in the Western Balkan are waiting to be integrated into the EU. However, the process of European integration is not a simple one and requires, in addition to the EU's openness to make this integration (the numerous internal crises of the EU in the last decade, but also the need for institutional reform have slowed down / stopped the enlargement process) an integrating realignment of all identity communities within these states. Even if in the past years the process was promising, the actual situation show that this is a highly contested and unfinished project. The refugee crisis and the growing geopolitical interest of other actors has turned EUs attention and put the Western Balkans back in the focus and on the political map of Europe, underlining the strategic importance of the region for Europe's security and stability.

The present paper starts from this important premise: the progress of these states towards the European integration, in particular, of Northern Macedonia, cannot be achieved without bringing all identity minorities, regardless of their form, in an integrative logic at regional and national level.

The concept, therefore, is to abandon the old approach that highlighted the disintegrating role of minorities and to identify the European desiderata of these minorities. Against the background of these European aspirations, these communities were able to propose integrative coexistence models in relation to the other cohabiting identity communities. These states become the laboratory of new forms of identity

that come to define the communities (including the national ones) in order to serve constructively the desideratum of progress and cultural-identity pacification of the societies. Ethnicity, religion or language were the basis of national identity in these states. However, an increasingly important role in the process of identity construction is acquired by the national identity, born of citizenship and individual aspirations. Viewed from the outside, we could say that the first levels of identity (ethnicity and language) are redefined in relation to the national identity given by citizenship. Of course the process is time consuming, flexible and reversible, and also involves many nuances from case to case.

In the third decade of transition, ethnicity remains important, but no longer holds monopoly in the definition of Western Balkan (WB) identities. Since the domestic and foreign policy context has changed, ethnicity is no longer the sole political identity dominating the lives of WB people. The gradual resolution of these conflicts has relieved the public sphere from excessive ethnic nationalistic discussions, which has been conducive to the emergence of civic identities; and, with the further rapprochement to Europe, offering the prospect of European non-ethnic identities. Despite the continuing salience of ethnic identity, they have been establishing new identities, such as European, global, political, and civic. Ethnicity remains important but no longer holds monopoly in the definition of the region's populations' identities, and ethnic identity is identified in inclusionary rather than exclusionary terms. There is increasing prevalence of non-ethnic identities like global and European identity.

The aims of the article is to present a detailed analysis of the relation and role of the Albanian community from NM in the European integration process of the country. Also, tries to reveal and focus on a wide variety of existing obstacles, problems, tensions and proposed solutions at national, regional and Euro-Atlantic level in the ongoing integration process.

The analysis is designed to address our desire to pursue the integrative role of the Albanian community in Northern Macedonia. We see the integration differentiated in relation to the level of territorial expression (in a geographical sense) and to the forms of expression in relation to the state.

Starting from the two perspectives, we identify the integrative role of the NM community:

- at *local level*, by contributing to the construction of participatory public administration models to ensure a peaceful coexistence with the other identity communities
- at *national level*, through a partnership with the Macedonian majority community and active involvement in the integrative consolidation of the NM state
- at the *Balkan regional level*, by stimulating the privileged relations of NM with Albania and Kosovo (the two states with Albanian population in the Balkans).
- at the *Euro-Atlantic level*, through the pro-Western aspirations constantly displayed by the Albanian communities in the 3 Balkan states and the active participation of the Albanians in the NM in the decision-making process which strengthens and stimulates the Euro-Atlantic course of this state.

Albania's relationship within NATO is well known, as is the history of support that the Kosovo Albanian community has received from this organization. At the same time, historically, the Slavic Orthodox community in the Balkans, including the Serbian and Macedonian ones, was marked by a geopolitical influence coming from the Russian-Orthodox cultural-oriental chain. In this context, the main question of our research is: to what extent is the presence of a large Albanian community in the NM decisive in choosing and establishing the main public policies aimed at ensuring European integration? Or, given the fact that a "third Albanian state in the Balkans" is hard to imagine even for the Albanians in the NM, for this NM community it remained the only national option, but one they want in NATO and the EU (hypothetically along with other Albanians)?

Northern Macedonia has proven to be one of the examples of states that have more or less implemented a political system of consociationalism[1]. This concept designates a model for managing diversity and supposes arrangements that involve the division of power in multi-identity states and societies in ethno-national, community linguistic or religious terms. The common interest in maintaining the state and

[1] Christopher McCrudden, "Consociationalism, equality and minorities in the Northern Ireland Bill of Rights debate: the inglorious role of the OSCE high commissioner for national minorities" în John Morison, Kieran McEvoy, Gordon Anthony (ed), *Judges, transition and human rights cultures,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 2.

citizenship are elements that support the community "contract"[2]. This is one of the general principles underlying the protection of ethno-national[3] minorities, namely the principle of partnership between identity communities[4].

2. The geopolitical context of the Albanians in the Balkans

In an analysis of the map of Europe in the middle of the second half of the nineteenth century, it was noted that in mainland Europe there were some great empires and big kingdoms. If we exclude Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, which at that time had not yet gained their independence from Ottoman suzerainty, few states remain in the category of small European states.

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[2] Will Kymlicka, *Teorie politică occidentala și relații etnice în Europa de Est*, în *Polis*, 2/2000, pp. 203-204.

[3] Adrian Severin, ”Stabilitatea şi sfidările multiculturalismului civic în Europa”, în Rudolf Poledna, François Ruegg, Călin Rus (coord.), *Interculturalitate Cercetări şi perspective româneşti*, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002, p. 21.

[4] The specialty literature and models resulting from international practice identify several general principles underlying the protection of ethno-national minorities:

a) the principle of respect for diversity - by promoting coexistence in the same habitat and equality, this principle is "largely different from the principle of tolerance which presupposed the arrogance of the hierarchical relationship between tolerant and tolerated" and ensures the mechanism for protecting the rights of all communities ethno-national and linguistic;

b) *the principle of partnership coexistence* (of the partnership between the cultural-identity communities) - based on this principle the ethno-national minorities are associated in the process of local, regional and national governance (general leadership);

c) *the principle of positive discrimination* – the ethno-national and cultural minorities obtain rights of a privileged nature in relation to the majority. These benefits are granted in order to compensate for inequalities, differences in socio-economic and cultural status and to stimulate integration;

d) *the principle of preserving the cultural identity* - considers the creation of an institutional and legislative regulatory framework that would contribute to the preservation of the specific elements of the ethno-national and cultural-identity communities;

e) *the principle of multicultural integration* (multiculturalism) - which “goes beyond mere coexistence and, refusing, equally, both the assimilation of minorities and their isolation (insularization, ghettoization), aims for the members of each entity, be it majority or minority, to and to acquire, understand, respect and express themselves according to the values specific to the culture of the other coexisting cultural communities”.

Map 1. Europe of 1871



Source: Cristian Vornicu, Magda Stan, *Istoria de nota 10*, Editura Cd Press, 2010, Bucureşti, pp. 16-17.

Compared to the contemporary period, the number of European states at that time was less than half. This was undoubtedly due to the existence of multinational empires on the structure of which the new nation-states were later created.

Map 2. Contemporary Europe



Source: https://lizardpoint.com/geography/europe-quiz.php, accessed on 11.12.2020

Towards the end of the nineteenth century all nations were highlighted by forceful positions. National, nation and national territory defense are identified as an inevitable objective. The nation (in other cases the race) was conceived as a supreme good, deserving all the sacrifice. The patriotic vision of national unity is so exalted as transcendent; accompanying the model of heroic virtues (discipline, solidarity of social classes, etc.). And so, the patriotic ideal converged, ultimately, to the unconditional defense of the nation. In this way, the defense of the nation was conceived as the defense of order, and groups were determined in this direction as leaders of the same national ideal[5]. All of this is specific not only to the consolidated nations that had their own states but also to those affirmed which, many, were still under the domination of multinational states. On the other hand, this national effervescence is accompanied by the attempts of the great empires to extend their territories and influence. This is the case with the expansionary tendencies of Tsarist Russia or Austro-Hungary towards the increasingly difficult to control the Ottoman Empire's Turks.[6]

The Peoples' Right to Self-Determination was one of the 14 points of the program proposed by US President Thomas Woodrow Wilson at the Peace Conference in Paris (1919-1920). The implementation of this principle in Paris allowed for the establishment of new national states following the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Tsarist Empire, and the separation of territories from the German Empire. Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland are formed. Southern Slavs from the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy joined with Serbia in the Serbo-Croat-Slovenian kingdom, which had been named Yugoslavia since 1929. Romania views its acknowledged act of the Union of the United States in the year 1918 achieved by the unification of Transylvania, Bucovina and Bessarabia with the Old Kingdom[7].

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[5] Mircea Brie, Ioan Horga, *Relaţiile internaţionale de la echilibru la sfârşitul concertului european (secolul XVII – începutul secolului XX)*, Ediţia a II-a, revizuită şi adăugită, Oradea, 2009, Editura Universităţii din Oradea, p. 351.

[6] Mircea Brie, "Identity Revolution and Minority Emancipation: A Cause of the European Concert's Crash. Contemporary Analogues", în Ioan Horga, Alina Stoica (coordonatori), *Europe a Century after the End of the First World War (1918-2018)*, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2018, pp. 245-248.

[7] *Ibidem*.

Map 3. Interwar Europe



Source: *Omniatlas*, available at
http://omniatlas.com/maps/europe/19201112/, accessed on 17.12.2020

We have presented this context of the major changes that have taken place, especially in the Balkans, in order to capture a part of the seemingly cyclical evolution of integration and disintegration in this area. From ancient Greek and Roman integration, to the Byzantine or Ottoman integration, to Yugoslav integration, all were followed by violent periods of disintegration. Some of the explanations for these bloody episodes in Balkan history are justified by the overlapping of ethno-national borders over religious, linguistic, cultural-identity ones in general. Conflicts were often loud and bloody.

Now comes a new integration: the European one. People who could not live together in Yugoslavia want to live together in the EU. Hence, the natural question is what kind of disintegration will there be after European integration?

All these assumptions are superficial, however, and do not go into the complexity of the phenomenon. What is relevant is the fact that from the identity point of view, but also at the level of geopolitical positioning behavior, these peoples stand out through a differentiation on several levels in relation to their neighbors. Historically, Albanian Muslim communities have been linked to the Ottoman Empire. When in the nineteenth century the Orthodox Slavic peoples in this area claimed separation from this empire, those who helped them were the older

Orthodox "brothers", the Russians. The Pan-Orthodox relations have been transferred to the geopolitical level even after the disintegration of Yugoslavia. The Serbs in the context in which they do not find support in the West take refuge geopolitically to the East. Without being an analysis of substance, the first impression is that of a geopolitical battle in this space: Albanians are helped by Americans, and Serbs by Russians. Somehow this logic seems to be reflected in Northern Macedonia as well: the Muslim community of Albanians bases their emancipation efforts on a special relationship with the West in antithesis to the majority Macedonian Orthodox community. At least, at the beginning of this stage. In the logic of this study, the Albanian community played a decisive role in the pro-Western orientation of Northern Macedonia and the development of a constructive partnership with the ethno-national majority. To be noted, however, that the process was not just one-way process. The majority Macedonian community has itself been a vector for promoting European integration in support of a mutually beneficial relationship. The perspective of European integration is one that can ensure the normalization of the inter-ethnic climate and protect the young Macedonian state.

Map 4. Ethnic distribution in the Western Balkans



Source: Library of Congress, *Ethnic distribution in the western Balkans, 2008*, https://www.loc.gov/item/2008620837/, accessed on 12.02.2021

The Albanian community in the Balkans did not have many favorable geopolitical options besides a close relationship with NATO, facilitated by the historical cultural-identity relationship with Turkey. Subsequently, in the context of US direct involvement in the region, it led to the reality of a natural choice.

Map 5. Distribution of Albanians in neighboring countries

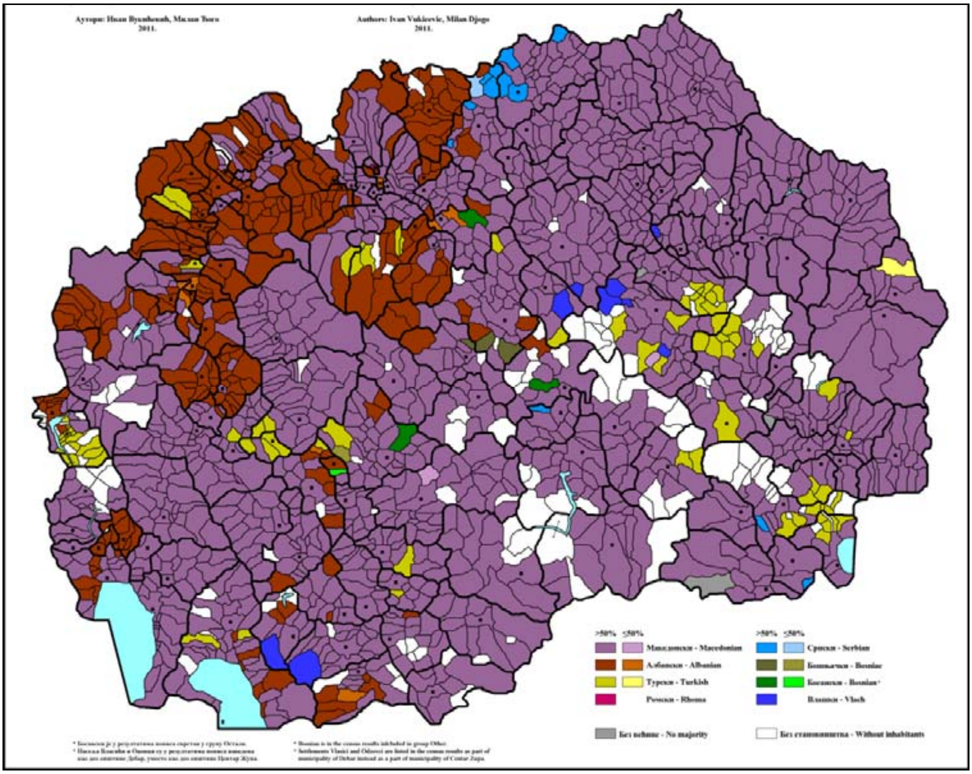


Source: https://www.mapmania.org/map/70331/distribution_of_albanians_in_neighboring_countries, accessed on 12.02.2021.

We note that a small part of the Albanian community in the Balkans still dreams of Albanian unity and Greater Albania. Identity has produced some nuances in the sense that ethno-linguistically and religiously this community has managed to maintain a status that would ensure the preservation of cultural-community specificity. In this context, identity has "migrated" to other associated forms of identity of a civic, civic, and in some cases even global-European nature. This phenomenon is obvious in Kosovo where more and more citizens are attached to the citizen identity given by the identity-state value. If in this case the Kosovo national identity is associated with the Albanian one, in Northern Macedonia, the ethno-Albanian community is subjected to a form of national otherness by associating it with the Macedonian citizenship identity of the state. In the

latter case, the partnership compromise for the well-being and preservation of statehood can lead to a mixed syncretic identity. Ethno-identitar identity (even linguistic or religious) takes a back seat in the process of constructing national identity. The national identity is to acquire an increasingly pronounced civic dimension, the result of political compromise.

Map 6. Linguistic map of North Macedonia



Source: apud https://www.deblauwetijger.com/macedonie-sociaaldemocraten-en-albanezen-gaan-regeren/, accessed on 12.02.2021 (Ivan Vukicevic, Milan Djogo, 2011)

The balance in inter-ethnic relations in Northern Macedonia is in the process of strengthening. The Albanian community, supported in its external efforts, has become aware not only of the force to influence the domestic policy of the state, but also of its limits. The way we mentioned earlier, a third Albanian state cannot be taken into account, the same lack of international support would have as well the attempts to withdraw the

borders in the Balkans. Such initiatives would only lead to new sources of instability and threaten the balance so difficult to achieve.

3. North Macedonia in the process of European Integration

The dissolution of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 90s created seven new independent states. After the armed conflicts that followed the initial proclamation of independence in several of these countries, a period of consolidation came, along with European integration as well as cooperation and reconciliation efforts.

The gradual resolution of these conflicts has relieved the public sphere from excessive ethnic nationalistic discussions, which has been conducive to the emergence of civic identities and, with the further rapprochement to Europe, offering the prospect of European non-ethnic identities.

The European Union opted for a regional approach in this part of the continent, in order to achieve greater stability among the conflicted. In 1996 the European Union made a differentiation between the two terms 'South-East (SE) Europe' and 'Western Balkans'. 'SE Europe' refers to all of the countries from the Gulf of Trieste to the Black Sea, while Western Balkans consists of all of the former Yugoslavian states except Slovenia, plus Albania[8].

Basically we can say that the relations between the EU and the Western Balkans countries is developing and for that the European Union has adopted a good approach to the region because it has brought progress as well as cooperation between the conflicted countries. The main tool in this process, where we can see also great achievements are the bilateral and multilateral meetings organised by or with the support of the European Union where political leaders of the region gather and take common decisions that are valuable for the whole region[9].

On 26 March 2020, the European Council reached a decision to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia. 15 years after being awarded candidate status and following 10 recommendations of the European

[8] Daniel. Trenchov, "The Future of the Western Balkans Integration within the EU", *Analytical Journal*, 4/2, 2012, pp. 1–12.

[9] Lucia Vesnic Alujevic, "European Integration of Western Balkans: From Reconciliation To European Future", 2012, pp. 6-9, Brussels.

Commission, North Macedonia finally starts the accession negotiations, the successful completion of which will pave the way towards membership in the European Union. Unlike in previous rounds of enlargement of the EU, the one with North Macedonia will be carried out according to the new methodology for enhanced accession negotiations. According to this methodology, the accession process is organised into thematic fields, which group the previous negotiation chapters[10].

In the following we propose to present a brief description of the integration process through which NM passed since the declaration of its independence, from January 1991.

Getting closer to the EU, starting negotiations and finally to hopefully reach the membership status in the EU represented a strategic objective for NM. But as we all now the so called "road to the EU" is long and brings several challenges which need to be answered by the candidate country. During this journey of integration, NM promoted itself as a reliable partner and ally of the EU, which passed a series of stages in its EU relations.

During the past 30 years there were several small, but very important steps, made through political dialogue, negotiations between the representatives of NM and the EU. In the upcoming part we would like to list some of these, without a very detailed description[11].

Because of several obstacles, especially concerning the name of NM, the process of its diplomatic recognition and the establishing of diplomatic ties with the EU was pushed until the end of 1995, when in the period still the Republic of Macedonia (RM) succeeded to open its mission to the EU[12].

A next important step was represented by the full partnership of RM starting from 1996 in the PHARE Programme of the EU. This partnership contributed and supported the process of reforms which were seeking accession to the EU.

In 1997 the Cooperation Agreement, the Transport Agreement and the Textile Agreement was concluded between RM and the EU. Also

[10] Ivan Nikolovski, "Advocacy paper" No.32/2020, pp. 7-11, available here https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CSO-and-accession-negotiations.pdf (last accesed in 15.01.2021).

[11] Demetropolou, Leeda., "Europe and the Balkans: Membership Aspirations, EU Involvement and Europeanization Capacity in South East Europe", *Southeast European Politics*, 3/2–3, 2002, pp. 87–106.

[12] *Ibidem.*

important to mention that in 1997 the European Commission opened a representative office in RM[13].

After years of political dialogue and negotiations in 2001 RM signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), which represented an important milestone in the countries European integration process.

In the upcoming years, negotiations and reforms continued and the membership application submitted by RM in 2004 in Dublin strengthened and confirmed the political commitment for joining the EU.

After the Brussels Summit from the end of 2005, the candidate status for RM was granted for EU membership.

The given status of being a candidate country continued the work and the belief not only at political leadership level, but also at civil society level that the European road represents the right direction for RM[14].

In this context in autumn 2007 the Financial Agreement for National Programme within the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the framework Agreement were signed between RM and the European Commission.

Using IPA funds continued the process of reforms and contributed to the Agreement o Visa Liberalisation from 2008 and 2009.

In the same year the European Commission recommended opening negotiations for accession of RM to the EU, based on the efficiency of the implemented key reforms priorities, known as the 8+1 benchmarks and the fulfilment of the Copenhagen criteria.

Unfortunately, in the upcoming years the reform process which was sustaining the EU integration of RM slowed down because of prolonged period of domestic political crises.

Still, work never stopped and after years of political dialogue and negotiations, RM made again huge steps in reaching its European goal with signing the Agreement for Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation in 2017 and the Prespa Agreement in 2018[15].

These agreements resolved very important issues which blocked the continuation of the integration process and also settled down new

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[13] *Ibidem.*

[14] Robert Manchin, "Balkan Public Opinion and EU Accession", in Jaques Rupnik (ed.), *The Western Balkans and the EU: 'The Hour of Europe*, Chailotte papers, 2011, pp. 163-172.

[15] *Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighbourliness, and Cooperation* https://mfa.gov.mk/en/document/1712 (last accesed on 05.01.21).

partnership positions and new cooperation guidelines between NM and its neighbours, namely Bulgaria and Greece[16].

The process of European integration has ups and downs. This was valid for every country which passed through this process. The above mentioned fluctuation can be caused by several factors, the complexity of the integration process, the high number of criteria which need to be fulfilled by the candidate country, by the bureaucracy, etc., and last but not least the lack of the political willingness.

This is what happened at the 2019 autumn European summit, when the start of EU accession talks with NM and Albania were rejected. The impasse or dilemma resulting after the October summit represents the latest and most flagrant expression of a weakening consensus on whether, how and how fast to integrate aspiring members. It also radically undermines previous commitments and initiatives which were taken in direction of European integration of the Western Balkans[17].

It is not our job, neither is this articles aim to establish who's fault the rejection was, but we can definitely declare that the lack of political willingness played a very important role in it.

In a relatively short period the causes of the initial rejection was solved, and in the spring of 2020 a new date was established for the start of EU accession talks with NM, using the revised methodology.

Surprising or not, problems and challenges which were slowing down NM European integration process did not stop.

In November 2020, Bulgaria refused to initiate the talks for the accessions of NM into the EU, due to some identity disputes between the two countries which represented another barrier to the process of NM's accession[18].

Nowadays the situation of the European integration process of NM is delayed and difficult. As we mentioned above, there can be several reasons. In 2020 and early 2021 these reasons are part of the EU's internal

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[16] Biljana Vankovska, "The Prespa Agreement, ethnicity ad nationality", available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339346444_THE_PRESPA_AGREEMENT_ETHNICITY_AND_NATIONALITY (last accessed on 23.02.21).

[17] Theresia Toglhofer, "No Time to Lose for the EU Overcoming the Accession Stalemate in the Western Balkans", in *DGAP Policy Brief No. 8*, December 2019, pp. 2-5.

[18] Goran Buldioski, Vessela Tcherneva, "How to advance a European solution to Bulgaria's and North Macedonia's dispute", available at https://ecfr.eu/article/how-to-advance-a-european-solution-to-bulgarias-and-north-macedonias-dispute/, (last accesed on 18.12.2020).

issues, including migration crisis, Brexit, terrorism, climate change, enlargement fatigue and not least the COVID-19[19].

Despite the fact that several objectives were reached in the process of European integration we need to admit that in the Western Balkans there are still tensions and unsolved issues between countries of the region. These tensions are representing the primary reasons why some of the states have not progressed at the pace it should.

This is not the case of North Macedonia, where after a 15 years long waiting period, the country is finally starting the EU membership negotiations. But this time, it will be different from the previous enlargement rounds. This time, Member States are proposing a different approach, which will help to remove or eliminate risks like new member states will not carry their problems into the Community. This new approach concerning the integration process is based on learning from the mistakes of the past, when certain parts of the integration process was affected, especially in the fields connected to the process of democratisation and rule of law. This is also reflected in the new methodology for enhanced accession negotiations[20].

As a result, or we can call it as a consequence, both, North Macedonia and the EU face the challenge that the accession process be legitimate, efficient, effective, successful and sustainable also after North Macedonia becomes a member of the Union in the upcoming future.

Even though negotiations have started and the process is ongoing, it is obvious that North Macedonia and every other candidate country will need to align its existing negotiating structure with the new revised methodology of the EU.

We propose to conclude this part of the article in a positive manner, but still it is necessary to present some of the side effects which can occur because of the fluctuating situation what we witnessed in the WB region in the past years.

After great achievements like the Prespa or the Agreement for Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Cooperation, rejections can be very dangerous.

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[19] Agon Demaja, "The Path of North Macedonia towards the European Union", in *JUSTICIA – International Journal of Legal Sciences*, 8, 2020, pp. 9-16 .

[20] Ivan Nikolovski, "Advocacy paper" No.32, 2020, p. 7, available here https://idscs.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/CSO-and-accession-negotiations.pdf (last accesed on 15.01.2021).

It can cause the reversal of the progress reached so far. It can bring political instability or a democratic deficit in the candidate countries. It can increase Eurosceptic attitudes combined with nationalistic tendencies.

All these together can worsen the good-neighbourly relations and threat the European security, and the European geopolitical and geostrategic interests in the WB, making place for increased meddling from other global powers.

4. The profile of Albanians of North Macedonia

Albanians are the largest ethnic minority in North Macedonia. According to the latest census held in 2002, Albanians comprised 25 percent of the population of North Macedonia. Unofficial estimates are higher due to large emigrant community.[21] Albanians live mainly in north-western parts of the country. The large majority of Albanians in North Macedonia are Muslims, but there are also some followers of the religions like the Bektashi dervish order, Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity.

4.1. Historical context

Albanians have lived in the geography of what is now North Macedonia since the time of Ottoman rule (1392-1913) and even before the Ottoman rule as the successors of the Illyrians which were the oldest settlers in Balkan Peninsula.

During the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1991), Albanians in Yugoslavia were the largest nationality without the status of a nation; they were concentrated in Kosovo and Macedonia mainly, but also in Serbia and Montenegro. Although the Yugoslav leader Tito introduced a range of measures to protect Albanian identity, including in the fields of education and culture, national grievances persisted. During the late 1980s Albanian protests in Kosovo spread also in North Macedonia in response to worsening conditions in neighbouring Kosovo. In response, the communist authorities clamped down on Albanian educational facilities and other alleged vehicles of Albanian nationalism, including personal names and textbooks. Albanian civil servants and teachers were dismissed and a number of Albanian-language schools closed. Walls traditionally built

[21] Gëzim Visoka & Elvin Gjevori, "Census politics and ethnicity in the Western Balkans", in *East European Politics*, 29, 4, 2013, pp. 479-498.

around Albanian homes were razed on the grounds that they had become fortifications. Ethnic Albanians countered these measures with a school boycott in several areas and demonstrations.

Since independence of North Macedonia in 1991, the country's politics has been heavily driven by both tensions and political dialogue between the two largest communities of North Macedonia, Albanians and Macedonians. In Yugoslav times, Albanians were recognised as a constituting nation of the state. However, the wording of the post-independence constitution of 1991, just after the independence of North Macedonia, referring to the country as the country of Macedonians, damaged the constitutional position of the Albanians, leading to tensions. The Albanians faced exclusion, including in the areas of private and public-sector employment. Tensions also rose around the issue of the Albanian university in Tetovo. Previously, Albanians had attended the University of Pristina, but after 1990, their participation declined on account of deteriorating conditions in Kosovo. No alternative facilities were arranged, and higher education continued almost exclusively in the Macedonian language. An attempt to establish a private Albanian-language university in Tetovo was blocked by the authorities.

Among the other notable crises include the Gostivar flag crisis in 1997 and the Kosovo war in 1999. These crises featured intense political confrontation between Macedonians and Albanians who were demanding an expansion of political and cultural rights. Events related to flag crisis of July 1997 in Gostivar, a town in the western part of the country. On 9 July 1997, special police forces moved into Gostivar without warning, illegally detained some key members of the ruling ethnic Albanian party, including Mayor of Gostivar, took down the Albanian and Turkish flags, and ransacked parts of the Gostivar town hall. The police action was taken as then national laws did not allow hoisting of minority flags in the public buildings. In violent clashes between the police and demonstrators later that day, more than 200 people, were injured and three people died. The police used excessive force against individuals who were not offering any resistance, or who had ceased to resist, and illegally detained many people who had not participated in the demonstration.

The 1999 Kosovo war did cause considerable inter-ethnic strains. During the war between NATO and Serbia, around quarter of a million of Kosovar Albanian refugees poured into North Macedonia, increasing fears

among the majority Macedonians that the demographic balance in country would be permanently altered.

The inter-ethnic tensions culminated with the ethnic conflict that occurred in 2001, which was the peak of the inter-ethnic struggle in the post-independence North Macedonia. The 2001 crisis came as outcome of series of inter-ethnic crises and violence that occurred in the country following its independence in 1991.

Following the 1991 independence, the country proved unable to meet the grievances of its minorities that have composed more than a third of the country's population. Albanians, forming the largest minority of the country, demanded a greater role in the country's politics and overall public administration. The Macedonian majority unable and unwilling to respond to the growing demands of its minorities, in February 2001 the country plunged into ethnic conflict where the country's security forces, mainly composed by ethnic Macedonians, clashed with the armed Albanian National Liberation Army. The conflict, caused deaths of around 150 on both sides and the destruction of houses and infrastructure in the conflict zones in the country's northern and north-western parts. The conflict left deep scars in the country's consciousness.[22] Conflict ended with the signing in August 2001 the peace agreement, the Ohrid Framework Agreement, named after the city where it was agreed.

The Ohrid Agreement laid down rules for more protection and representation rights for the Albanians.[23] As a result of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, important guarantees were provided for ethnic Albanians, particularly as regards local governance, education, language use and participation in public life, including public-sector employment. The Agreement ceased the hostilities and led to the constitutional and administrative changes in order to meet the grievances of the ethnic Albanian and other minority groups. The Agreement opened a new era in North Macedonia's transition as it brought major change in the national

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[22] Kristen Ringdal, Albert Simkus & Ola Listhaug, "Disaggregating Public Opinion on the Ethnic Conflict in Macedonia", in *International Journal of Sociology*, 37, 3, 2007, pp. 75-95.

[23] István Gergő Székely & István Horváth, "Diversity recognition and minority representation in Central and Southeast Europe: a comparative analysis", in *Nationalities Papers*, 42, 3, 2014, pp. 426-448.

polity.[24] The Agreement ever since 2001 has remained as an important framework upon which the progress of the country in moving towards a modern democracy is measured. Reform environment brought with the implementation of the Agreement led to some genuine compromises. For instance, it led to power sharing arrangement that included the former Albanian guerrilla group turning into a political party. With the agreement made in January 2019 Albanian-language became the second official language at the national level.

The position of ethnic Albanians has improved remarkably, however, number of challenges remain, particularly as regards the representation in the society, representation in the politics and emergence of new challenges as regards the inter-ethnic harmony.[25]

4.2. Albanians contributing North Macedonia into the European integration agenda

It was the Ohrid Agreement that brought North Macedonia into the agenda of the EU and thus into the agenda for further enlargement. The Agreement and its implementation has been seen as a basis that will provide the country a European future. The Agreement also opened a new era in the EU's involvement in the country, and provided a framework against which the progress of the country towards stability, democracy and association with the EU was measured.[26]

North Macedonia experiences the calmest period in its post-communist history. International and domestic agreements and arrangements ending the conflicts and confrontations in the country, largely is respected and to a great extent implemented, that in turn marks, in principle, the end of an era of post-conflict reconstruction in the country.[27] Armed insurgents or secessionist movements no longer

[24] Cvete Koneska, "On peace negotiations and institutional design in Macedonia: social learning and lessons learned from Bosnia and Herzegovina", in *Peacebuilding*, 5, 1, 2017, pp. 36-50.
[25] Heinz Willemsen, "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: Persisting Structural Constraints to Democratic Consolidation", in *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 6, 1, 2006, pp. 83-101.
[26] Adea Gafuri & Meltem Muftuler-Bac, "Caught between stability and democracy in the Western Balkans: a comparative analysis of paths of accession to the European Union", in *East European Politics*, 2020.
[27] Alice Ackermann, "Macedonia in a post-peace agreement environment: A role for conflict prevention and reconciliation", in *The International Spectator*, 37, 1, 2002, pp. 71-82.

challenge North Macedonia. The country earlier passed the "existential test" of its transition; there is no question anymore about the prospect of its future existence.

The Albanians, through the Ohrid Agreement, pushed for constitutional and administrative changes in order to meet the grievances of the ethnic Albanian and other minority groups and for improvement of the democratic credentials of the country.[28] Thus, the Albanians have opened a new era in the country's democratic transition as it brought major change in the national polity.

On the European integration agenda, the Albanians with the Ohrid Agreement brought the country into the agenda of the EU and thus into the agenda for further enlargement. The position of Albanians has been there in all EU conditionalities put to North Macedonia. It is the belief that with the implementation of the agreement, North Macedonia has fulfilled the Copenhagen criteria. In this context, it makes virtually impossible to disentangle the impact of the agreement and thus of Albanians, from the processes of European integration. Besides the direct impact on democratisation, there has also been a number of indirect effects of the Albanians on the country. First, there has been growing role of the wider society in the policy processes, reflected with the heavy deployment of the international community, and the rise of civil society.[29] Second, the decentralisation reform package that has been directly associated with the Albanians taking leadership in the municipalities where they are majority, but which in the same time is related to the European integration processes, have had cumulative effect in loosening the grip of the capital Skopje in the policy processes and balancing the power of the central and national institutions. Third, transnational networks provided with the growing role of the Albanians in the society, have provided an important channel for socialization of the political elite from all ethnic groups. This influence deriving from ever closer contacts have had also systemic implications.[30] Fourth, there has been also intensive efforts of Albanians to foster the

[28] Eben Friedman, "The Ethnopolitics of Territorial Division in the Republic of Macedonia", in *Ethnopolitics*, 8, 2, 2009, pp. 209-221.

[29] Laurie Nathan, "The real deal? The post-conflict constitution as a peace agreement", in *Third World Quarterly*, 41, 9, 2020, pp. 1556-1574.

[30] Karin Dyrstad, Halvard Buhaug, Kristen Ringdal, Albert Simkus & Ola Listhaug, "Microfoundations of Civil Conflict Reconciliation: Ethnicity and Context", in *International Interactions*, 37, 4, 2011, pp. 363-387.

regional cooperation particularly with the countries of the western Balkans with the aim to enhance the joint efforts towards the common priorities, such as integration into EU or NATO. Regional cooperation has been success in the case of Macedonia that it with the regional cooperation has internalized some of the regional challenges into its domestic polity that in turn has enhanced its capability to deal with the post-conflict challenges in the country.

North Macedonia in fact is clear example where there is lack of common identity among its constituent ethnic and national groups. Thus, the way ahead for North Macedonia is the European identity that is critical in circumstances like that of North Macedonia where several nationalities have to coexist within one state framework.[31] Structures that transcend nations and overcome nationalism are building block of this effort.

5. Conclusion

The European integration process of North Macedonia that started in 2001 led to changes in the country. North Macedonia was transformed from a conflict society in 2001 to Candidate State in 2005 via the credible material incentives offered for complying with EU reforms. Since the end of inter-ethnic violence of 2001, North Macedonia has grown into the state with the potential of stability and prosperity.[32] The country and the European Union have put tremendous effort into these two noble goals. This offers the country a real chance of joining the EU and gaining the Union's hard-won security and prosperity that something almost all the country's citizens want, regardless of their ethnicity.

The timing of this success in European integration agenda has corresponded to the period when the Albanians in North Macedonia as the second largest community were experiencing the most reform oriented period in their -communist history. Their struggle for more protection and representation, that culminated with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001, brought the new dynamics to the reform environment in the country that in turn has marked, in principle, the birth of new North Macedonia, with a new reform strategy tackling the three most important

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[31] Ljubica Spaskovska, "The fractured 'we' and the ethno-national 'I': the Macedonian citizenship framework", in *Citizenship Studies*, 16, 3-4, 2012, pp. 383-396.

[32] Justin L. C. Eldridge, "Playing at peace: Western politics, diplomacy and the stabilization of Macedonia", in *European Security*, 11, 3, 2002, pp. 46-90.

needs and necessities of the country: stabilisation, democratisation and Europeanization. These are three processes that have defined the path of the role of Albanians in the European integration agenda of North Macedonia. With these achievements, particularly in stabilisation and democratisation, made North Macedonia, which was formerly a weak state, to be able to deliver services and thus be able to absorb and implement the European norms and standards.

In all the European integration stages North Macedonia had to satisfy various requirements mainly framed in overall EU integration agenda and all of these stages have provided for an important opening of North Macedonia to Europeanisation pressures. However, all of the above-mentioned changes have been depended on the readiness of North Macedonia itself and of its communities. Thus, it has been combination of the overall transformation of the country with the growing role of the Albanians in pushing for European integration agenda, which has brought these changes.

What the country faced prior to engagement of the Albanians was that all incentives for institutional change were exhausted. Thus, the growing engagement of the Albanians in the politics and in pushing for European integration agenda as the major incentive for inter-ethnic harmony in the country, increased the appeal of the state of North Macedonia to all of its citizens and thus establish a critical mass of the population that would support undertaken reforms in the road ahead for European integration of the country. The new era has reinforced the state identity of the country and thereby curbing the countervailing tendency towards disintegration along ethnic and territorial lines. Also, it has been established new constituencies who are able to absorb its norms and standards. Giving more role to Albanians has served to the most direct and obvious political and security interests: a political interest in successfully providing legitimacy to the public goods produced by the state institutions; and security interest in stabilizing the country through employment policies that in fact remains a key challenge to the country: high level unemployment rates coupled with interethnic tensions. Giving confidence back to state institutions rather than to para-structures, have triggered an irreversible process in facilitating the smooth political transition of the country from conflict-ridden weak state, to functioning democratic polity.

The case of the Albanians in North Macedonia shows the way how a minority community can become a powerful force in influencing the

European integration of a country. The Albanians forced the country to become more proactive and taking ownership and leadership for the EU related reforms. It was clear from the beginning that North Macedonia would be able to master the challenge of overcoming potential inter-ethnic tensions in any part of its territory if each ethnic group is being given responsibility with commensurate say in the decision-making. It is their involvement in decision-making that will base their own, specific and unique responsibilities on legitimacy. The best tool in this regard was giving more protection and representation rights through the Ohrid Agreement. That has been true during the years of the democratic consolidation in western Europe and it is has been true in fragile democracies of western Balkans, like North Macedonia.

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Il futuro dei Balcani Occidentali nell'Unione Europea tra le riforme e la difficolta di sviluppo economico

Anca Stângaciu

1. La realtà economica balcanica tra le riforme e la difficoltà di sviluppo

Per iniziare è più che rilevante ricordare il sillogismo del croato Zlatko della Bosnia Centrale secondo il quale "La Bosnia è uno strano paese perché non è dei croati, non è dei musulmani, non è dei serbi, ma [allo stesso tempo] è dei croati, dei musulmani [bosniaci] e dei serbi"[1]. Quindi, in questo modo si può capire il valore ossessivo che loro danno ai confini nell'Europa Sud-Orientale ed all'idea dello stato-nazione, benché la globalizzazione e la mondializzazione favoriscano l'interdipendenza e le migrazioni di massa. Comunque, questa tematica riporta l'attenzione verso questioni d'interesse fondamentale, come il rispetto nei confronti delle diverse culture. In un tale contesto, ancora un gran problema e proprio quello che a Sarajevo per esempio, "tutti pensano al passato, nessuno guarda avanti"[2]. Però, il destino istituzionale, economico e sociale dei Balcani si muove visibilmente anche se lentamente.

Una mappa delle recenti dinamiche economiche mostra che i cambiamenti strutturali dei Balcani Occidentali (Bosnia Erzegovina, la Serbia, l'Albania, la Macedonia, il Montenegro ed il Kosovo) ed in particolare dei paesi dell'ex Iugoslavia, sono a volte costruttivi, ma ancora insufficienti, difficili e problematici.

La più occidentale delle repubbliche ex iugoslave, la Slovenia, riconosciuta come stato indipendente senza esitazioni dal Vaticano nel 1991[3], ha ottenuto l'ingresso nell'Unione Europea e nella NATO nel 2004, e poi nell'Eurozona e nell'area Schengen a partire da gennaio, rispettivamente dal dicembre 2007, tutti questi successi europei essendo

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[1] G D'Avanzo, "Io e i musulmani, ieri li trucidavo ora sto con loro", in *La Repubblica*, 29 luglio 1995.

[2] Domenico Quirico, "Sarajevo, terra rossa di sangue dove l'Europa è morta due volte", in *La Stampa*, 16 gennaio 2014.

[3] Armando Pitassio, "Il tardo ritorni degli eredi degli ex comunisti alla guida della Slovenia", in Antonio D'Alessandri, Armando Pitassio (a cura di), *Dopo la pioggia. Gli Stati della ex Jugoslavia e l'Albania (1991-2011)*, Lecce: Argo Editrice, 2011, p. 188.

festeggiati con il primo semestre di presidenza, portato a termine nel 2008. Con una stabilità politica chiara, la Slovenia, sempre la più produttiva tra le repubbliche ex-jugoslave, ha ottenuto, a partire dagli anni Novanta, una florida economia, con il settore dell'industria di 40% del PIL ed un crescente scambio commerciale con l'Occidente. Quindi sono sviluppati i settori del legno, della siderurgica, dell'elettronica ed dei servizi, e allo stesso tempo la situazione strategica permette un importante sviluppo di imprese import-export e certamente del turismo. Dunque, la Slovenia, occupa il sedicesimo posto nel quadro dei paesi UE a livello del PIL per capita, il più grande della regione. Essendo un'economia emergente è chiaro che attiri molto capitale nel contesto delle opportunità investizionali.

Il PIL pro capite nell'area del Europa Centro-Orientale e Balcanica per 2019 (Index EU27=100), il livello degli investimenti diretti esteri ed il tasso di disoccupazione[4]

	Il PIL per capita (%)	Investimenti Diretti Esteri Netti (% del PIL)	Il tasso di disoccupazione (%)
Bosnia Herzegovina	32	2,6	16,4
Bulgheria	53	1,2	4,2
Croazia	65	1,9	6,6
Kosovo	25	2,9	25,7
Macedonia di Nord	38	2,6	17,4
Montenegro	50	7	15,2
Romania	68	2,7	3,9
Serbia	41	7,8	10,9
Slovenia	88	3,1	4,5
Ungheria	73	3,7	3,4

Se ci chiediamo quali potrebbero essere i limiti o le debolezze di questo modello sloveno abbastanza performante, preso come esempio da imitare nell'area, con un meccanismo economico flessibile, efficiente e di elevati standard, allora dobbiamo dire che sono principalmente legati ai

[4] Eurostat, European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Muntenegro, Serbia, Slovenia 2020 Report*, Brussels, 6.10.2020 [https://ec.europa.eu/], p. 51, 20.01.2021; [The Global Economy.com], 14.11.2020.

margini delle economie emergenti, caratterizzate da una crescita media. Questo è anche la ragione per la quale l'economia slovena, come tutte le economie dei paesi del Sud-Est Europa, è stata colpita dalla crisi del 2008-2012, con una diminuzione scivolata dai 49 miliardi del 2009 ai 45 del 2012[5] e con una situazione aggravata nel settore del credito. È di una fondamentale importanza che i governi sloveni applichino un ampio programma di privatizzazioni, che coinvolge ben 14 aziende statali, quindi una parte importante del sistema controllato ancora dallo stato, e considerato da tempo come modello da seguire. Rimane poi che i decidenti politici procedano al consolidamento fiscale proposto dalla Commissione Europea, riducendo la spesa pubblica, riformando il mercato del lavoro e il sistema pensionistico.

La Croazia, con un nazionalismo che ha governato il periodo postbellico, ha preso la strada della democrazia reale e di sviluppo dopo la morte di Franjo Tudman di 2000, seguendo il lento processo di preparazione per l'integrazione, cominciato nel 2005 e finalizzato con l'adesione del 2013[6]. Con una maggioranza di 90% cittadini croati ed una minoranza serba di 4,5%, il paese ha fatto alcuni progressi per il riconoscimento dei diritti delle minoranze e dei profughi. Ma, gli ostacoli e le sfide rimangono tante: le reminiscenze del passato comunista, la disoccupazione, i rischi dell'emigrazione dei giovani, la difficoltà delle riforme strutturali (nel contesto di una prevalenza del terziario in paragone con l'industria leggera e turismo), l'export debole e la competitività deficitaria. Poi, ci sono i fenomeni economici e sociali come la politica del sacrificio e di conseguenza i forti malumori nella popolazione, una situazione non nuova anche per altre nazioni della regione balcanica ed est danubiana europea che ha conservato e accentuato il clientelismo e la corruzione, attraverso delle gare e bandi pilotati, tangenti, amicizie tra politica e affari, ecc[7].

Il Montenegro, un paese indipendente dall'Unione Statale di Serbia e Montenegro a partire dal 2006, ha presentato domanda di adesione all'Unione Europea nel 2008, dopo 8 anni di negoziati, quindi nel 2020, tutti

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[5] Matteo Tacconi, "La grande crisi, i Balcani out", in *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 23 settembre 2013 [www.balcanicaucaso.org], 10.08.2020.

[6] Francesco Guida (a cura di), *Dayton dieci anni dopo: guerra e pace nella ex Jugoslavia. Atti del Convegno*, Roma, 21-23 novembre 2005, Roma: Carocci Editore, 2007, p. 208.

[7] Matteo Tacconi, "Croazia nell'UE, ma a pezzi", in *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 27 giugno 2013 [www.balcanicaucaso.org], 10.08.2020.

i 33 capitoli essendo affrontati e 3 provvisoriamente chiusi. Con un'economia basata sui servizi, in parte sull'agricoltura e sulla pastorizia, ma soprattutto sul turismo, il Montenegro ha registrato nel nuovo millennio una crescita vigorosa in ambito economico grazie ai regolamenti sul libero scambio ed agli investimenti locali e stranieri. Tuttavia, secondo il giudizio dell'opposizione, i governi del paese sono bloccati nella corruzione, nella criminalità organizzata, nell'utilizzo improprio delle finanze pubbliche, e certo nei problemi di frode, conflitto d'interesse e abusivismo edilizio[8].

La Serbia, insieme all'Albania, alla Macedonia, al Montenegro e alla Turchia, è stata identificata come potenziale candidato all'adesione all'UE durante il vertice del Consiglio europeo di Salonicco nel 2003, poi nel 2009 ha formalmente presentato domanda e nel marzo 2012 è stato concesso lo status di candidato. I negoziati decisi nel 2013 dal Consiglio Europeo, hanno cominciato nel 2014 con il capitolo 32 "Controllo Finanziario" e 35 "Normalizzazione delle relazioni tra Serbia e Kosovo". Da una prospettiva economica, ovviamente, possiamo parlare di una pesante eredità anche nel caso della Serbia, dove l'industria e l'agricoltura devastata, la disoccupazione e la drastica situazione legata ai profughi croati e bosniaci hanno accompagnato il ritorno alla realtà non mitizzata del 2002 (Accordi di Belgrado) e 2006 (la separazione di Montenegro). Solo che la crisi economica mondiale ha portato la Serbia dopo il 2009 tra i paesi balcanici più colpiti con il crollo del prodotto interno lordo e con una disoccupazione in constante ascesa, cioè più di un milione di persone nel 2013. I problemi strutturali serbi sono migliorati dopo 2013 grazie al boom di esportazioni (fabbrica Fiat di Kragujevac ecc), ai finanziamenti europei legati alla candidatura allo stato membro, alle riforme economiche interne, all'attività del turismo ed alla politica pro investimenti stranieri. Purtroppo ad eccezione dell'aeroporto "Nikola Tesla", non si può sostenere lo stesso per il settore dei trasporti, soprattutto ferroviario[9]. I problemi sociali, le squadre e le bande nazionaliste, le milizie paramilitari e altre forme di guerriglia urbana chiedono una soluzione istituzionale adeguata[10].

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[8] Francesco Martino, "Montenegro, un paese da cambiare", in *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 6 nov. 2012 [www.balcanicaucaso.org], 10.09.2020.

[9] Federico Sicurella, "A 40 all'ora. La lenta modernizzazione delle ferrovie serbe", in *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 28 ottobre 2013 [www.balcanicaucaso.org], 20.09.2020.

[10] Giuseppe Zaccaria, "Belgrado, hooligans da stadio al servizio di poteri oscuri", in *La Stampa*, 4 novembre 2013 [www.balcanicaucaso.org], 15.07.2020.

Malgrado il fatto che la Macedonia avesse firmato un accordo di stabilizzazione e associazione con l'Unione Europea nel 2004 e che avesse presentato nello stesso anno la domanda di adesione all'Unione Europea, con il ricevimento dello status di paese candidato nel dicembre 2005, la decisione del Consiglio e poi della Commissione Europea di avviare i negoziati di adesione con questo paese e presa solo nel marzo 2020, dopo aver fatto progressi sostanziali nell'attuazione delle "priorità urgenti di riforma"[11]. Poi dobbiamo dire che in Macedonia del Nord, dove a differenza della Bosnia, l'Unione Europea è intervenuta per tempo saturando possibili tumulti legati alle più che prevedibili e pericolose "crisi d'identità"[12], la conciliazione etnica tra macedoni e albanesi e diventata più evidente dopo lo status di candidato, ottenuto nel 2005. Infatti, il sistema istituzionale garantisce una basilare rappresentanza nei gruppi amministrativi. Una sorta di tradizione del compromesso, ereditata dallo stato unitario. La Macedonia ha retto l'urto della crisi del 2008, ma è anche vero che debba affrontare la mancanza d'impiego, il malcontento dell'opinione pubblica, l'esistenza del mercato nero ed il fenomeno della povertà di quasi 30% degli abitanti. Più grave è il fatto che molti dei giovani non hanno mai avuto un lavoro favorendo quindi il piccolo contrabbando e il rischio di un'autentica bomba sociale. Ma, i dati allarmanti vengono anche da parte del settore immobiliare, dove l'offerta è ancora in eccesso. La politica economica è quella di attrarre numerosi investimenti stranieri con lo scopo principale di aumentare l'occupazione, però il sistema legale ancora debole e la forte corruzione impediscono una crescita economica consistente. La trasparenza discutibile e tutti questi fattori economici contribuiscono a mantenere il PIL pro capite tra i livelli più bassi d'Europa.

In Bosnia Erzegovina, un paese potenziale candidato allo statuto di membro dell'Unione Europea, con la domanda fatta nel 2016 e consigliata in 14 punti nel 2019, la situazione politico-istituzionale ed economica ha alcuni miglioramenti, però ci sono ancora dei punti sensibili e degli ostacoli per la democrazia[13]. Nel contesto in cui c'è una comunità croato-bosgnaca,

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[11] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. North Macedonia 2020 Report*, Brussels, 6.10.2020 [https://ec.europa.eu/], 14.11.2020.

[12] Francesco Guida. (a cura di), *op. cit.*

[13] Matteo Tacconi, op. cit; Zaira Tiziana Lofranco, "L'implosione delle identità etniche in Bosnia Erzegovina: il sistema scolastico e la sua riforma", in Antonio D'Alessandri,

quindi la Federazione di Bosnia Erzegovina e una maggioranza serba nella Republika Srprska, la Costituzione dello Stato prevede meccanismi di ripartizione del potere in chiave etnica, con una legislatura bicamerale dove i gruppi costituenti (croati cattolici, bosniaci musulmani e serbi ortodossi) devono essere rappresentati in modo paritario, così come avviene nei luoghi di lavoro pubblici. Poi, in Parlamento, ogni entità gode di ampio potere di veto. Non è escluso però che proprio il censimento e la strumentalizzazione da parte delle èlite al potere crea il rischio di etnocrazia invece di spostare gli equilibri sulla base dei reali residenti[14]. Dal punto di vista economico, la pianificazione centralizzata ha lasciato un'eredità più pesante rispetto ad altri paesi balcanici, poi la guerra della prima parte degli anni Novanta ha provocato il crollo della produzione delle grandi imprese, ma anche di quelle piccole e medie. Quindi, la produzione in stallo, il basso tasso di crescita del PIL, la paralisi dei trasporti, la decadenza dei grandi colossi industriali, la disoccupazione di quasi 43% nel 2012 e di 16% nel 2019 ed in genere l'economia allo sbando definisce la realtà del paese, forse con l'eccezione del Distretto di Brčko.

Con la sua eredità molto pesante, con il contesto della Risoluzione 1244 del Consiglio di Sicurezza ONU del 1999 che prevedeva un regime di amministrazione internazionale temporanea e con il chiaro intento di ricostruire le istituzioni amministrative locali e l'economia, il Kosovo rimane il paese balcanico bloccato tra l'indipendenza autoproclamata nel febbraio 2008 ed il mancato riconoscimento siccome nel marzo del 2020 solo 97 su 193 degli stati membri dell'ONU e 22 degli stati membri dell'UE hanno riconosciuto la Republica Kosovo. Lo scopo finale degli albanesi kosovari e quello di costruire un proprio stato-nazione, ma le prospettive sono difficili a causa di un'economia debole e rispettivamente di un basso livello di sussistenza, il più basso dell'Europa, poi a causa di traffici illeciti, della mafia locale, del clientelismo politico e ovviamente della corruzione e delle attività illegali. Inoltre, i problemi economici strutturali come la mancanza di grandi imprese, la scarsa capacità di fornitura elettrica, lo stile di vita rurale della gran parte della popolazione kosovara, l'apertura difficile verso gli investimenti stranieri, il livello di esportazioni minore di qualsiasi altro stato europeo e soprattutto l'enorme tasso di disoccupazione

Armando Pitassio (a cura di), *Dopo la pioggia. Gli Stati della ex Jugoslavia e l'Albania (1991-2011)*, Lecce: Argo Editrice, 2011.

[14] Andrea Oskari Rossini, "Bosnia-Erzegovina, il rischio dell'etnocrazia", in *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 13 novembre 2013 [www.balcanicaucaso.org], 10.10.2020.

(26% nel 2019) contribuiscono ad alimentare un senso di generale sfiducia[15]. È anche vero che la tipica crescita economica seguita dai paesi che hanno preso la strada dell'economia di mercato sembra di essere arrivata anche per il Kosovo dove nel 2019 la crescita del PIL è stata di 4,2% e gli investimenti diretti esteri di quasi 3% del PIL[16], però questo allontanamento da un modello economico di crescita instabile, grazie agli investimenti pubblici e privati, la spinta economica kosovara non ha diminuito nel 2019 l'alto tasso di disoccupazione a causa delle limitazioni nel nuovo settore privato basato sul start'up con meno dipendenti[17]. Indubbiamente, il Kosovo si definisce ancora come uno stato con uno sviluppo economico lento, con forti tensioni politiche ed etniche e con tante sfide per continuare la riforma istituzionale, cioè la trasparentizzazione della pubblica amministrazione, la limitazione dell'alta corruzione e della criminalità organizzata, la diminuzione dell'inefficacià della giustizia, l'incoraggiamento della libertà d'opinione, ecc[18].

Quindi, si può dire che una parte dell'instabilità di alcuni regioni dei paesi ex-iugoslavi sia determinata non solo dalla crescente spinta religiosa, etnica, storica, territoriale, linguistica ed anche dall'alfabeto cirillico [usato dai serbi, ma non dai croati, vicini a quello romano], ma anche dal generalizzato malcontento economico della popolazione. Infatti, la crisi attuale, non è solo politica ed economica in questa parte dell'Europa, con strutture economiche deboli e democrazie fragili, ma si aggiunge anche la crisi del coronavirus la quale può alimentare tensioni interne, la propaganda, il nazionalismo, le tendenze politiche autoritarie e la crisi demografica causata dell'emigrazione[19].

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[15] Gianfranco Lizza, *Geopolitica delle prossime sfide*, Novara: De Agostini Scuola, 2011, p. 99; European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Kosovo 2020 Report*, Brussels, 6.10.2020 [https://ec.europa.eu/], p. 53, 14.11.2020.

[16] European Commission, *ibidem*, p. 100.

[17] Majlinda Aliu, "Kosovo: la crescita economica non crea occupazione", in *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 19 febbraio 2019 [www.balcanicaucaso.org], 9.10.2020.

[18] European Commission, *Commission Staff Working Document. Kosovo 2020 Report*, Brussels, 6.10.2020 [https://ec.europa.eu/], 14.11.2020.

[19] Federico Ferrone, "La crisi demografica arriva nei Balcani", in *Internazionale*, 31 agosto 2020 [https://www.internazionale.it/notizie], 14.11.2020; Milada Anna Vachudova, "Strategies for Democratization and European Integration in the Balkans", in Marise Cremona (a cura di), *The Enlargement of the European Union*, Oxford, 2003, pp. 141-160.

2. La cooperazione economica regionale e l'integrazione economica degli stati balcanici

Nel 1999 l'Unione Europea ha avviato il Processo di Stabilizzazione e di Associazione che è stato il quadro strategico per sostenere il graduale riavvicinamento tra i paesi dei Balcani Occidentali e l'UE nonché il Patto di Stabilità, un'iniziativa più ampia che ha coinvolto tutti i principali attori internazionali. Il Processo di Stabilizzazione si è basato su accordi che hanno previsto relazioni contrattuali bilaterali, assistenza finanziaria, dialogo politico, relazioni commerciali, cooperazione regionale e zone di libero scambio con questi paesi. Infatti, uno dei principali obbiettivi era l'incoraggiamento dei paesi della regione a cooperare in un'ampia gamma di settori, tra cui il perseguimento di crimini di guerra, le questioni di confine, i rifugiati e la lotta alla criminalità organizzata[20].

Nel 2008, il Patto di Stabilità è stato sostituito dal Consiglio di Cooperazione Regionale con sede a Sarajevo come una struttura che opera secondo le linee guida del Processo di Cooperazione dell'Europa Sudorientale. Il Consiglio mira a sostenere le aspirazioni europee ed euro atlantiche dei suoi membri non UE, nonché a rafforzare la cooperazione in settori come lo sviluppo sociale ed economico, l'energia e le infrastrutture, la giustizia e gli affari interni, la cooperazione in materia di sicurezza, lo sviluppo del capitale umano e le relazioni parlamentari. L'UE e molti dei suoi stati membri sostengono e partecipano al Consiglio di Cooperazione Regionale.

Un'altra iniziativa regionale importante è l'Accordo Centro europeo di Libero Scambio (CEFTA). Inoltre, i paesi dei Balcani Occidentali partecipano ad una serie di quadri regionali. Risulta che tutti gli stati dei Balcani Occidentali hanno un rapporto istituzionalizzato con l'UE, sottopunto al Processo di Stabilizzazione e di Associazione, due di questi paesi, la Slovenia e la Croazia essendo membri dell'Unione Europea a partire dal giugno 2004 e dal luglio 2013.

Si può dire quindi, per quanto riguarda l'integrazione economica fra UE e Balcani che la cooperazione regionale è fondamentale per garantire la stabilizzazione politica e per favoreggiare le opportunità economiche. L'agenda UE per la connettività ha impresso, in particolare, un ulteriore impulso alla cooperazione regionale nei Balcani Occidentali.

[20] Parlamentul European. *Balcanii de Vest* [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/ro/sheet/168/balcanii-de-vest], 10.11.2020.

Nel 2014 è stata lanciata sotto la presidenza italiana della Commissione Europea la Strategia Macroregionale per la Regione Adriatico-Ionica EUSAIR la quale ha l'intenzione di creare sinergie e favorire il coordinamento tra tutti i territori dei seguenti paesi: Italia, Croazia, Slovenia, Grecia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia Erzegovina e Serbia. La filosofia di questa strutture dell'Euroregione Adriatico-Ionica è costruita su 4 pilastri tematici - crescita blu, collegamento della regione, qualità ambientale e turismo sostenibile - e svolge un ruolo decisivo nella promozione dell'integrazione europea dei Balcani Occidentali, mettendo l'accento sulla biodiversità ed ecosistemi, sostenabilità e mobilità intelligente, economia circolare[21], ecc.

In più, gli obbiettivi del processo di Berlino avviato nel agosto 2014, in particolare l'istituzione dell'Ufficio Regionale per la Cooperazione Giovanile (Regional Youth Cooperation Office RYCO), hanno fatto da questa iniziativa diplomatica tedesca correlata all'allargamento dell'Unione Europea ai paesi dei Balcani Occidentali, uno degli strumenti di approccio più realistici e concreti fino ad oggi[22]. Quindi, l'Unione Europea ha stanziato 500 mila euro a sostegno di un nuovo progetto biennale per l'Ufficio Regionale per la Cooperazione Giovanile teso a migliorare la mobilità, la cooperazione e l'attivismo giovanile nei Balcani Occidentali, promuovendo in tal modo il processo di riconciliazione nella regione[23]. RYCO è un'organizzazione internazionale, con sede a Tirana, fondata in base ad un accordo raggiunto fra i governi dei sei paesi della regione - Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia del Nord, Montenegro e Serbia - durante il vertice dei Balcani Occidentali svoltosi a Parigi nel luglio del 2016. Diventato operativo, questo ufficio ha fatto tra gli altri, la proposta di creare un "citizen's laboratory" per sviluppare un progetto dedicato alla prevenzione della radicalizzazione.

Infatti, anche l'istituzione della Comunità dei Trasporti dell'Europa Sudorientale, stabilita dal trattato firmato a Trieste in 2017 è stato un

[21] European Green Deal Call [https://www.adriatic-ionian.eu/], 14.10.2020.

[22] Stelian Teodorescu, "Cine face jocurile în Balcanii de Vest?", in *Monitorul Apărării și Securității*, 25 mai 2020 [https://monitorulapararii.ro/cine-face-jocurile-in-balcanii-de-vest-1-31923], 11.11.2020.

[23] Agenzia Nova, *Balcani: da UE 500 mila euro per mobilità e cooperazione giovanile nella regione*, 18 febbraio 2019 [https://www.agenzianova.com/], 10.08.2020.

risultato di questa iniziativa[24] e riguardava l'Austria, la Croazia, la Francia, la Germania, l'Italia e la Slovenia assieme all'Unione Europea. Quindi, nel luglio 2017 i leader della regione hanno approvato un piano d'azione per lo spazio economico regionale e sottoscritto il trattato relativo alla Comunità dei Trasporti. Due giorni prima, nello stesso capoluogo del Friuli Venezia Giulia è stato iniziato il Civil Society Forum Trieste 2017 che ha raccolto rappresentanti della società civile dei Paesi dei Balcani Occidentali e dell'UE allo scopo di elaborare raccomandazioni e proporre azioni per affrontare le sfide politiche ed economiche che interessano l'area.

Nel giugno 2019, la Commissione Europea decideva che l'integrazione regionale è un fattore fondamentale per innalzare il tenore di vita nei Balcani Occidentali. La creazione di uno spazio economico regionale (REA) stimola la concorrenza consentendo l'aumento della produttività. Un mercato regionale incentiverebbe il commercio interregionale e renderebbe i Balcani Occidentali una destinazione più attraente per gli investimenti[25]. La creazione di uno spazio digitale e di mercati del lavoro più integrati offrirà inoltre opportunità per i giovani della regione. Il nuovo accordo di roaming regionale sottoscritto nell'aprile 2019 avrà effetti molto positivi per i cittadini e le imprese della regione, con una riduzione progressiva delle tariffe di roaming dal luglio 2019 e la loro eliminazione dal luglio 2021[26]. Il Rapporto continua con l'agenda digitale per i Balcani Occidentali, con la necessità di cooperazione regionale e relazioni di buon vicinato, con lo sviluppo per le reti dei trasporti e dell'energia e con progetti di mobilità per i giovani sostenuti tramite

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[24] La Comunità dei trasporti nel settore dei trasporti stradale, ferroviario, per via navigabile interna e marittimo, denominata più semplicemente Comunità dei trasporti, mira a sviluppare la rete di trasporti tra l'Unione europea e questi Paesi e si fonda sull'integrazione progressiva dei mercati dei trasporti dei Paesi dell'Europa sudorientale nel mercato dei trasporti dell'Unione europea sulla base del pertinente acquis (ossia il corpus legislativo adottato dall'Unione europea per il conseguimento dei suoi obiettivi), anche in materia di norme tecniche, interoperabilità, sicurezza, gestione del traffico, politica sociale, appalti pubblici e ambiente, per tutti i modi di trasporto, escluso il trasporto aereo, Davide Scavuzzo, *Istituzione della Comunità dei trasporti tra Unione europea e alcuni Paesi dell'Europa sudorientale* [http://www.transportwatch.eu/istituzione-della-comunita-dei-trasporti-tra-unione-europea-e-alcuni-paesi-delleuropa-sudorientale/], 5.09.2020.

[25] Commissione Europea, *Comunicazione della Commisione al Parlamento Europeo, al Consiglio, al Comitato Economico e Sociale Europeo e al Comitato delle Regioni. Comunicazione 2019 sulla politica di allargamento dell'UE*, Bruxelles, 29.5.2019 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2019:0], 11.11.2020.

[26] *Ibidem*.

l'ufficio regionale per la cooperazione giovanile, tra il programma Erasmus+ per il dialogo interculturale nel campo dell'istruzione superiore ecc. La dichiarazione sulla transizione verso l'energia pulita, firmata durante la riunione ministeriale del febbraio 2019, offre ai Balcani Occidentali un notevole margine per elaborare un'agenda verde, una crescita verde ed una economia circolare[27].

Nel luglio 2019 a Poznan, partendo dal fatto che la cooperazione giovanile è fondamentale per migliorare la connettività regionale, l'UE continuava a sostenere il coinvolgimento dei giovani dei Balcani Occidentali in numerosi progetti dell'UE, come le azioni Marie Skłodowska-Curie, i programmi l'Europa Creativa e le finestre Gioventù in azione promosse dal Centro risorse dell'Europa Sudorientale (SALTO).

Prendendo in considerazione il Processo di Berlino, come pure i successivi vertici tenutisi da Vienna a Poznan, il Parlamento Europeo raccomanda alla Commissione del 19 giugno 2020 tra l'altro di incrementare gli incentivi politici ed economici per i paesi dei Balcani Occidentali e di migliorare la coerenza tra il processo di allargamento e le iniziative politiche nell'UE attraverso l'organizzazione di riunioni regionali annuali ai margini del Consiglio Europeo con i leader dei Balcani Occidentali. Il Rapporto riesce a sottolineare l'importanza cruciale della dimensione sociale e della coesione socioeconomica e il loro ruolo chiave durante tutto il processo di adesione, di promuovere e rafforzare l'integrazione economica regionale nei Balcani Occidentali, che è già attuata nel quadro dell'Accordo Centroeuropeo di Libero Scambio (CEFTA) e modellata sulla base dell'acquis dell'UE. Il Parlamento Europeo cerca di sostenere attivamente l'integrazione economica tra l'UE e la regione estendendo le politiche dell'Unione ed il mercato interno ai paesi dei Balcani Occidentali e sostenendo iniziative per uno spazio economico regionale (MAP REA) basato su quattro pilastri – commercio, investimenti, mobilità e integrazione digitale – essenziali per lo sviluppo economico della regione e per accelerare la convergenza con l'UE.

Poi, il Parlamento sostiene la cooperazione dei paesi dei Balcani Occidentali con organizzazioni regionali e internazionali quali il Consiglio di Cooperazione Regionale, l'Organizzazione per la Cooperazione e lo Sviluppo Economico e con istituzioni finanziarie internazionali quali la Banca Europea per la Ricostruzione e lo Sviluppo e la Banca Europea per

[27] *Ibidem*.

gli Investimenti, ma anche la continuazione dell'assistenza necessarie per completare i processi di adesione della Serbia e della Bosnia Erzegovina all'Organizzazione Mondiale del Commercio. Alla fine è stata molto importante la richiesta di difendere gli interessi dell'Unione attenuando gli effetti negativi degli accordi di libero scambio con l'Unione Economica Eurasiatica firmati da paesi che hanno presentato domanda di adesione all'Unione Europea, fornendo sostegno alle azioni volte a garantire la qualità e la sicurezza dei servizi energetici e di trasporto conformemente alla proposta avanzata dalla Commissione relativamente a un piano economico e di investimento strategico per i Balcani Occidentali[28].

Bisogna ricordare che i decidenti dell'UE hanno presentato nell'ottobre 2020 un piano economico e di investimenti per incoraggiare la ripresa a lungo termine e accelerare la convergenza economica con l'UE.

Quindi è abbastanza ovvio il fatto che i Balcani Occidentali non sono più così solitari e che nonostante le varie e moltissime difficoltà, discontinuità, problemi d'identità, meticciati culturali, asperità religiose oppure insicurezza (stradale, giovanile, femminile) diventano uno spazio più chiaro, all'intero di una stabilità economica evidente. Con tutti questi desideri ed aspirazioni il partenariato economico Balcani-Unione Europea si trova in una fase intermedia che deve essere consolidato e fortificato molto d'ora in poi, proprio perché la collaborazione regionale nel campo degli investimenti, commercio, trasporti, gioventù e digitalizzazione può essere una parte rilevante del processo di bilanciamento, modernizzazione, occidentalizzazione ed europeizzazione. Ciò non significa che i Balcani Occidentali siano al sicuro dalla destabilizzazione, dall'intolleranza, dall'abuso, dall'ingiustizia, dalla scissione sociale ed etnica, dalla povertà o dalla disintegrazione istituzionale, per non parlare dell'instabilità politica.

La cooperazione economica, il sostegno economico, l'assistenza finanziaria ed istituzionale, la promozione del ruolo della società civile, l'apertura di prospettive per i giovani ed in genere le varie forme di pre-integrazione ed integrazione economica possono essere meccanismi per superare negli anni, delle difficoltà balcaniche. L'economista americano di origine romena, Paul Rosenstein-Rodan negli anni '60 diceva sulla Romania che per superare le debolezze balcaniche ha bisogno di una grande spinta, di un big push dall'estero, questa affermazione potendo essere per i Balcani

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[28] Parlamento Europeo, *Testi approvati, Balcani Occidentali, a sequito del vertice del 2020*, 19 giogno 2020 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0168_IT.html], 11.11.2020.

attuali ancora molto valida. Certamente tutta questa filosofia di sviluppo economico non esclude ovviamente lo sforzo interiore, la forza e la capacità di reinvenzione, rigenerazione, gestione, equilibrio, negoziazione, diversità nella normalità, cambiamento della mentalità, evoluzione, di essere efficienti, di cambiare la cultura del lavoro, di essere performanti nella propria particolarità. Bisogna quindi cambiare ed abandonare il modo di essere fanariota, balcanico, disorganizzato, rurale, improduttivo, inefficace, intollerante, discriminatorio. È necessario anche riconfigurare positivamente i legami dei caratteri sociali, economici, demografici e religiosi, e certo attenuare ed alla fine annullare le azioni delle oligarchie circoscritte, di pochi potenti, di organizzazioni criminali e mafiose, di bandiere nazionaliste e di milizie paramilitari.

3. Gli investimenti diretti italiani nel Europa Balcanica

La regione balcanica è rivelata nel suo processo di stabilizzazione degli ultimi anni come un grande teatro per i giochi economici delle forze internazionali come la Cina e la Russia, ma soprattutto l'UE. Nel 2016 gli scambi complessivi tra i paesi UE e quelli dei Balcani Occidentali ammontavano a oltre 43 miliardi di euro, con un incremento dell'80% in meno di un decennio[29]. Si tratta di interessi concreti, tangibili, che spesso restano in secondo piano rispetto ai grandi piani strategici proclamati nelle dichiarazioni ufficiali del Consiglio e della Commissione Europea. Quindi, l'UE rimane di gran lunga il primo partner commerciale dei Balcani Occidentali, sia per le importazioni (73,5 %) che per le esportazioni (80,6 %). Le imprese dell'UE sono i principali investitori nella regione (73 % degli investimenti diretti esteri) e costituiscono quindi la maggiore fonte esterna di crescita e di occupazione nella regione[30].

L'integrazione del mercato in base alle norme e agli standard dell'UE contribuirà a creare possibilità di sviluppo di nuove catene del valore e di miglioramento dell'attrattività della regione per gli investimenti diretti esteri.

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[29] Commissione Europea, *Comunicazione della Commissione al Parlamento Europeo, al Consiglio, al Comitati Economico e Sociale Europeo e al Comitati delle Regioni*, Strasburgo, 6.2.2018 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/], 16.11.2020.

[30] Commissione Europea, *Comunicazione della Commisione al Parlamento Europeo, al Consiglio, al Comitato Economico e Sociale Europeo e al Comitato delle Regioni. Comunicazione 2019 sulla politica di allargamento dell'UE,* Bruxelles, 29.5.2019 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2019:0], 11.11.2020.

Di sicuro, gli sgravi fiscali e costo del lavoro sono gli aspetti di maggior attrattiva che spingono le imprese estere a investire e internazionalizzare verso Serbia, Bosnia ma anche Croazia, Montenegro, Macedonia e Slovenia, nonostante i costi di trasporto e a discapito (in alcuni casi) della qualità del prodotto.

In un tale contesto, in cui la prospettiva oppure la soluzione per i Balcani costituisce una sfida per il futuro dell'Europa, in Italia, tradizionalmente, l'allargamento dell'UE ai Balcani gode di un sostegno politico trasversale a livello locale, nazionale ed europeo. Infatti, l'Italia continua a mantenere e a rafforzare la sua presenza politica ed economica nella regione, in modo particolare applicando degli strumenti di cooperazione del sistema Italia con i Balcani Occidentali e esportando il modello italiano nell'area.

Ci sono molte ragioni strategiche per cui l'Italia potrebbe essere protagonista della cosiddetta "europeizzazione" dei Balcani Occidentali, tra questi trovandosi la sua tradizionale presenza economica riflessa soprattutto nell'espansione bancaria, quindi nell'elaborazione delle strategie finanziarie e industriali delle grandi banche miste italiane a partire degli anni Venti. Poi, ci sono degli interessi politici e geostrategici e negli ultimi anni, in modo più evidente, si aggiungono delle opportunità di affari e di interscambio commerciale. Per fare ciò, l'Italia ha la possibilità di coinvolgere un ampio spettro di portatori di interessi, che include attori economici (prevalentemente PMI), attori sociali e culturali (ONG, musei, università, ecc.), tutti soggetti che beneficiano in gran parte di risorse comunitarie, ma anche attori istituzionali come la magistratura e le prefetture, che da quasi tre decenni sono direttamente coinvolti in questioni di sicurezza comune[31].

Il Programma Seenet, South East European Network, è stato lanciato ufficialmente nel 2002 è concluso nel giugno 2006 come una rete di autorità locali promossa dalla Regione Toscana allo scopo di sistematizzare e riorganizzare il patrimonio di contatti, relazioni, progetti ed esperienze che gli enti locali e le ONG del suo territorio avevano maturato nella loro attività di cooperazione nei Balcani Occidentali. Dal 2007 è stata elaborata una strategia di internazionalizzazione tra Piccole e Medie Imprese (PMI) in Veneto, Puglia, Serbia e Bosnia Herzegovina ed a partire del 2017

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[31] Andrea Stocchiero (a cura di), *Alla ricerca del Sistema Italia nei Balcani Occidentali*, Rapporto per il CeMiSS, CeSPI, 2007 [marzo 2007 www.files.ethz.ch], 10.11.2020.

l'Albania e la Bosnia Erzegovina sono beneficiari dei fondi APS italiani dell'Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione Internazionale[32]. Poi sono state organizzate Le reti del sistema camerale sotto il nome dell'Associazione Sportello Area Balcanica costituita dalla Provincia e dalla Camera di Commercio di Vicenza. L'operatività dell'Associazione si fonda su un'esperienza di tipo umanitario, che si è negli anni trasformata in un sostegno alla cooperazione economica. L'attuale Associazione Sportello Area Balcanica (denominazione acquisita nel 2002) operava inizialmente solo in Croazia, ha poi allargato il suo ambito di azione a Serbia e Montenegro, Bosnia Erzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, Romania. Le principali attività dell'Associazione consistono nella partecipazione di workshop, seminari e missioni da e verso i Balcani, nello scambio di informazioni e best practice.

In questo ambito balcanico è rilevante la creazione della rete dell'Unione Industriale di Venezia proprio nel Distretto autonomo di Brcko, la zona più sviluppata della Bosnia Erzegovina, sottoposta al controllo internazionale (Ufficio dell'Alta Rappresentante). Si tratta di una modalità di internazionalizzazione di un intero distretto con una riproduzione di esternalità positive, soprattutto di una forza di lavoro specializzata e spillover technologici. Tuttavia, la realizzazione da parte dell'Unione Industriale di Venezia di un piano urbanistico e anche di un parco industriale per Brcko (finanziato dal Governo italiano con 380.000 Euro), a partire dal 2002 non è rimasta fuori dalle difficoltà legislative e burocratiche bosniache[33]. In Croazia, dove l'Italia è primo partner commerciale del Paese è maturata fra la fine degli anni '90 e i primi anni del 2000 la presenza della COOP Consumatori Nordest Italiani, come impresa-rete nel campo della distribuzione (Ipercoop a Zagabria, Osiek, Spalato ecc).

L'internazionalizzazione del sistema bancario italiano si riflette anche nell'attenzione rivolta ai Balcani Occidentali, quindi la rete Unicredit è presente in 16 paesi dell'Europa Orientale e Balcanica con più di 2.800 filiali, 48.000 dipendenti, 16.4 milioni di clienti e 41 miliardi di Euro di impieghi totali (2006). Infatti, il Gruppo Unicredit, leader del mercato in

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[32] *Investire nei Balcani Occidentali, Gli Strumenti Finanziari a Supporto delle Imprese*, Padova: NPPA, 2018 [http://repository.regione.veneto.it/], 10.09.2020.

[33] Raffaella Coletti, Andrea de Panizza, "La dimensione economica: l'espansione del modello italiano nei Balcani occidentali", in Andrea Stocchiero (a cura di), *op. cit.*, p. 127.

Croazia con la Zagrebacka Banka, ha una quota di mercato superiore al 20% in Bosnia Erzegovina e superiore al 5% in Serbia e Montenegro. E' inoltre presente con un ufficio di rappresentanza in Macedonia, mentre è assente in Albania[34].

In base alle statistiche, gli Investimenti Diretti Esteri netti dell'Italia con i Balcani Occidentali sono aumentati da 168 milioni euro nel 2012 a 241 milioni nel 2018, la presenza italiana nei Balcani Occidentali alla fine del 2017 riflettendosi nelle 911 aziende in particolare operanti nei settori energia, moda, edilizia, infrastrutture, automobilistico e finanziario[35]. Infatti, l'Italia costituisce un mercato di sbocco di primaria importanza per tutti i paesi dei Balcani Occidentali, con una quota tra il 15 e il 20% per il gruppo nel suo insieme, che nel caso dell'Albania supera il 70%[36] e con una preferenza per gli scambi di merci, delocalizzazione di attività produttive in settori tradizionali e con una posizione di forza nel settore finanziario.

Quindi, a partire dal fatto che il quadro europeo costituisce una nuova struttura di opportunità per Il sistema Italia, l'Italia e interessata alle relazioni politiche, applicando degli strumenti di cooperazione con la regione balcanica, poi prende in considerazione la dimensione territoriale e l'esplosione degli attori sub-nazionali, la dimensione sociale e la ricerca per i nuovi modelli di sviluppo, la dimensione democratica e certo quella della sicurezza con i contributi degli attori italiani ai processi di democratizzazione e dell'evoluzione del peace-keeping nei Balcani[37]. Ma, soprattutto, sono gli interessi economici e l'espansione del modello italiano, come è successo in Bulgheria e in Romania a partire dagli anni Novanta. In conclusione, si può dire che Il sistema Italia (ministeri, ambasciate, enti pubblici, imprese), solitamente avanzato in campo economico, ha un ruolo chiave nel processo d'internazionalizzazione, con l'aiuto degli attori economici, ma anche di quelli istituzionali, degli strumenti, delle strategie di azione e certamente delle tipologie economiche[38].

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[34] *Ibidem*, p. 132.

[35] Ministero degli Affari Esteri, *Balcani Occidentali. Principali indicatori economici* [https://www.esteri.it/], 10.10.2020; Marzio Bartoloni, "Balcani Occidentali, Italia partner strategico: +50% di interscambio in 5 anni", in *Il Sole 24 ore* [https://www.ilsole24ore.com/], 10.101.2020.

[36] Raffaella Coletti, Andrea de Panizza, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

[37] Andreea Stocchiero (a cura di), *op. cit.*

[38] In dibattito politico il sistema paese oppure il sistema Italia può essere definito come l'insieme coeso e coordinato di attori pubblici e privati che persegue un medesimo fine di interesse nazionale nella politica estera.

L'Italia ha da sempre favorito - con ogni governo e maggioranza - la più ampia integrazione nell'Unione dei Paesi dell'area ed alcuni voci italiane (come la senatrice Stefania Craxi) dicono che consecutivamente con la strategia complessiva e di lungo periodo dell'Unione Europea, l'Italia farebbe bene a definirne una sua, elaborando una "agenda per i Balcani" che rafforza la presenza politica ed economica nella Regione[39].

4. Il futuro europeo dei Balcani Occidentali: integrazione economica, stabilità democratica ed adesione all'Unione Europea oppure un destino astruso bizantino, con accenti fanarioti?

Nel 2003, a Salonicco, poi in febbraio e maggio del 2018 a Sofia, l'UE ha manifestato il chiaro interesse per promuovere la pace, la stabilità e lo sviluppo economico dei Balcani Occidentali, compresa l'opportunità per l'integrazione nelle strutture comunitarie. Solo che il percorso istituzionale, politico ed economico di alcuni stati balcanici è stato difficile e anche problematico.

La Repubblica Macedonia del Nord ha ricevuto lo status di paese candidato nel dicembre 2005, però la disputa sull'uso del nome Macedonia portata con la Grecia non le ha permesso di avviare negoziati nemmeno nel febbraio 2019 quando le disposizioni dell'Accordo di Prespa (l'adozione del nome Macedonia del Nord) sono entrati in vigore. Solo nel marzo del 2020, il Consiglio ha deciso di avviare i negoziati di adesione, assieme all'Albania. Più avanzato, il Montenegro ha chiuso a partire dal giugno 2012 tre capitoli di quelli 33, tra i quali Relazioni Esteri, rispettivamente Scienza e Ricerca, invece la Serbia ha aperto a partire dal 2014 diciotto capitoli ed ha chiuso due. Bosnia Erzegovina e Kosovo hanno solo status di paesi potenziali candidati. Nel primo caso, la Commissione ha adottato la sua oppinione sulla domanda di adesione all'UE del paese nel maggio 2019, individuando 14 priorità chiave che il paese deve soddisfare in vista dell'apertura dei negoziati di adesione tra cui le riforme profonde nei settori della democrazia, della funzionalità, dello stato di diritto, dei diritti fondamentali e della riforma della pubblica amministrazione. Il Kosovo è il paese più problematico, sul quale continua a pesare il non pieno riconoscimento internazionale e la questione aperta con la Serbia, quindi

[39] Stefania Craxi, *Una strategia possibile per l'integrazione dei Balcani Occidentali*, CeSPI, 20 luglio 2020 [https://www.cespi.it/], 10.08.2020.

l'aspettativa giuridica per la conclusione di un accordo globale con la Serbia (un accordo bilaterale, quello di Bruxelles è stato firmato nel 2013).

Quindi, per uscire dall'impasse balcanico ma anche per riformare la filosofia di allargamento, la Commissione Europea nel febbraio del 2020, raccogliendo proposte avanzate dalla Francia, ha adottato una nuova strategia per i negoziati di allargamento mirata, in primo luogo, ad un maggiore controllo politico dei negoziati attraverso un più ampio coinvolgimento del Consiglio. La Francia ha finalmente approvato l'apertura dei negoziati con l'Albania e la Macedonia del Nord, formalizzata nel Consiglio Europeo del 26 marzo 2020. In questo modo, il Nord della Macedonia e l'Albania vanno ad aggiungersi a Montenegro e Serbia, paesi "apripista" con i quali i negoziati sono stati aperti rispettivamente nel 2012 e 2014; mentre Bosnia Erzegovina e il Kosovo restano indietro.

Comunque, è molto evidente che il compimento del processo di trasformazione, di democratizzazione e stabilizzazione si concretizzerà solo nella misura in cui i paesi dei Balcani Occidentali riusciranno a diventare stati membri dell'UE[40]. L'integrazione economica può essere da questo punto di vista un passaggio essenziale e di certa necessità. Infatti, nel ottobre 2020, la Commissione Europea ha adottato la comunicazione sulla politica di allargamento dell'Unione e il pacchetto allargamento 2020, Josep Borrell sottolineando che "i cittadini dei Balcani Occidentali fanno parte dell'Europa e appartengono all'Unione Europea"[41]. A conferma di questo indirizzo, parallelamente è stato presentato il Piano economico e di investimenti per i Balcani Occidentali, "per stimolare la loro ripresa a lungo termine e accelerare la loro convergenza economica con l'Unione Europea", quindi lo sviluppo delle energie rinnovabili, la transizione verde e digitale, la crescita sostenibile e posti di lavoro".[42]

Rimane un pilastro fondamentale anche l'Agenda Verde dei Balcani Occidentali adottata al vertice dei Balcani Occidentali a Sofia (novembre

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[40] Luisa Chiodi, "Dopo la formulazione della nuova strategia Ue sull'allargamento ed a seguito del vertice di Sofia tra l'UE e i Balcani Occidentali, un'analisi del ruolo dell'Italia nel processo di allargamento", in *Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso*, 25 maggio 2018 [www.balcanicaucaso.org], 15.11.2020.

[41] SIR, Agenzia d'Informazione, *Ue-Balcani: Commissione presenta il "pacchetto allargamento". Risultati conseguiti e ostacoli verso la futura adesione* [https://www.agensir.it/], 10.11.2020.

[42] Federico Baccini, "Allargamento UE, la Commissione spinge i Balcani con un Piano di investimenti", in *EuNews*, 6.10.2020 [https://www.eunews.it/], 12.11.2020.

2020), una agenda che prevede azioni sulla lotta contro i cambiamenti climatici, impulso all'economia circolare, tutela della biodiversità, i sistemi alimentari sostenibili, la digitalizzazione, ecc.

La politica di allargamento ai Balcani Occidentali è anche un investimento geostrategico per la pace, la sicurezza e poi per la crescita economica in tutta l'Europa. Quindi, si può parlare di una forma di allargamento strategico perché l'ingresso degli stati balcanici occidentali sarebbe giustificato non solo da considerazioni di ordine ideale come la promozione dell'assetto valoriale dell'UE, oppure da ragioni di natura economica come l'apertura di nuovi mercati e la ricerca di manodopera bassa, ma ancora da valutazioni di tipo geopolitico.

Da parte dei paesi di questa regione, la sfida maggiore rimane il consolidamento dello stato di diritto, determinato da una lentezza generale per garantire i principi dell'indipendenza giudiziaria, della lotta alla corruzione, della libertà di espressione e del pluralismo dei media.

Per l'Italia l'europeizzazione dei Balcani Occidentali e quindi gli allargamenti dell'UE verso l'area balcanica sembra essere un interesse strategico per ragioni politiche, economiche e di sicurezza. Infatti, Nicola Orlando, nominato il 7 gennaio 2020 il nuovo ambasciatore italiano in Kosovo dichiarava che "siamo impegnati a sostenere il percorso di rafforzamento delle istituzioni di questo giovane e dinamico Paese, il cui destino è inscindibile da quello dei paesi europei"[43].

Per concludere, dobbiamo dire che Vukovar, Mitrovica, Sarajevo, Srebrenica oppure Sangiaccato rimangono ancora colpite dai guai pesanti del passato, dai conflitti e dall'individualismo etnico e devono ancora costruire una visione per un futuro nondiviso, pacifico e nobile. Rimane chiaro che l'attuazione delle riforme accelererà i tempi favorevoli per la regione. A questo punto, il leader Vetevendosje Kurti ha ragione quando dice che l'allargamento UE sia necessario per evitare la "balcanizzazione" dell'Europa, facendo riferimento alla balcanizzazione della Spagna, ma non solo. Anche Vittorio Fillippi mette in discussione una delle questioni dell'Unione Europea: europeizzazione dei Balcani o balcanizzazione dell'Europa?[44]. In ogni caso, l'esperienza degli altri paesi ex-comunisti

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[43] Farnesina, Tweet, Roma [https://twitter.com/ItalyMFA/status], 11.09.2020.

[44] Agenzia Nova, *Balcani: Balcani: leader Vetevendosje Kurti, allargamento Ue per evitare "balcanizzazione" dell'Europa*, 18 febbraio 2019 [https://www.agenzianova.com/], 2.10.2020; Vittorio Filippi, "Unione Europea: Europeizzazione dei Balcani o balcanizzazione

mostra indubbiamente che il processo di integrazione ed il futuro comunitario nel senso reale e profondo, liberato dalle reminiscenze del comunismo durerà per decine di anni.

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IDENTITY ISSUES IN THE STATES OF THE WESTERN BALKANS (REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA) IN THE PROCESS OF PREPARING FOR EU ACCESSION

Melania-Gabriela Ciot

Introduction – historical, cultural and religious context

Western Balkans represents a region who supposed to wish to be part of the European Union. More than 100 years ago, this region was the starting point of "Europe's self-destruction"[1]. We are speaking about a territory which was devastated by conflicts and violence, which was under the byzantine domination for a millennium and half of millennium under Turks, and partly Venetian and Habsburg domination[2]. But if we are referring to this particular region, we have to mention the federated Yugoslavia and the wars of contemporary times, with all of the negative effects of the ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical and cultural diversity[3]. Calvocoressi[4] is describing the important contemporary years from region's history, by underlying the Tito's leadership and the Russo-Yugoslav relations. Internally, Tito had his own right and willingness to moderate the doctrinal rigidity: he introduced the workers' management in industry in 1950 and abandon the collectivization in the countryside in 1953. Russian-style command economy was dismantled in the 1950s and in the early 1960s the industrial control was transferred to the workers' councils, extending their rights to the management (including the decisions regarding the allowance of investment funds and what to do with the profit) and new lines of credit were available through local banks. But these measures failed to give the industry the expected inputs, so inflation raised. And so did the dependence of Yugoslavia from the IMF and USA. Still, the liberalization and decentralizing standards were resumed. Practically, there

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[1] Jeans Woelk, "Identity-diversity and the territorial dimension in the Western Balkans", in L'Europe en formation, no. 363, Printemps 2012 - Spring 2012, Internet source available at [www.cairn.info ›load_pdf› ID_A ...], accessed on 24th of November 2020, p. 189.

[2] *Ibidem.*

[3] *Ibidem*, p. 190.

[4] Peter Calvocoressi, World Politics 1945-2000, Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2001, pp. 333-358.

was only the psychological idea of decontrol and self-management, because the reality brought losses in productivity.

Another element that Calvocoressi was speaking, besides economy, was Tito's preoccupation for increasing the cohesion of the state and the creation of a Yugoslav identity "over and above"[5] other nationalities. Tito himself was half Croatian and half Slovene, and he was motivated to maintain the preservation of Yugoslavia. So, for his generation, this objective was possible, but for the 1970s generation the nationalist feelings were deeper. It was a generation which did not know the war's experience and traumas. This nationalistic feelings went so high in 1971, when some Croatian asked for autonomy and sovereign independence within Yugoslavian confederation. He managed to resolve these demands from the younger generation of Croatians with the help of a Croatian colleagues of his age, Vladimir Bakarić. He had similar experiences in Serbia, Slovenia and Macedonia.

In reality, the centralism of Communist Party was put under question and separatism was "an extreme form of […] decentralism"[6]. One approach was that centralism represented and offense to the local patriotism. Decentralization was supported by technocrats, managers and politicians from inferior and local levels. All these separatist and decentralizing currents prevented the federation to develop in a similar structure like Switzerland. But Yugoslavia was a "unique […] and the only communist neutral in the world"[7], in the 1980s, when Tito died.

The 1990s found Yugoslavia as a country in which co-exited different ethnic and religious communities, but at the political level it was a country with several republics run by politicians who emphasized their roots and loyalties[8] . The most powerful from all the republics was Serbia and the Serbian leaders had the support of Orthodox Church in the country and beyond (Greece and Cyprus). It is important to mention that religion was an important part of nationalism in this region and that the majority of the persons who served in the army at that time were Serbs.

The 1990s decade could be surprised in the rise of Slobodan Milosevic, a Serb nationalist and a skilled politician, who had "no loyalty to

[5] *Ibidem*.
[6] *Ibidem*, p. 336.
[7] *Ibidem*, p. 337.
[8] *Ibidem*, p. 338.

the idea of Yugoslavia"[9]. When Croatia and Slovenia declared their independence in 1991, the federal government sent military troops in both countries. The Slovenian secession couldn't been stopped, but in Croatia, which had a larger numbers of Serbs, begun the war. More atrocities will follow. The international intervention had two reasons[10]: to stop the fighting because of the fear of spreading and to support the victims of war and the protection of the persons who provided these services. (UN agencies). The EC also intervened to pacify, especially Germany, which took the lead for the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia's independence.

Regarding Macedonia, the emotionality surrounded that years were also internationalized by reactions which came from Greece (with historical arguments invoked), and also from Bulgaria. Calvocoressi considers that Macedonian name had its roots in antiquity and to the warrior kings who conquered Greece. Later, Macedonia was defined in terms of territory and language, fact which is too ambiguous or inconsistent. The author said that there was no Macedonia for over 2,000 years and no agreement regarded a distinctive language and that the nowadays Macedonians are Slavs (still disputing the proximity to Bulgarians or Serbs), with a language close to Bulgarians and cultural commonalities with Serbs. In the XIXth century, the Serbian and Bulgarians churches were eager to assert themselves against the Hellenic patriarch of Constantinopole and created tensions between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia, which were focused particularly on Macedonia and Thessalonica[11]. In political terms, it was an anti-Turks separatism of Slav states, and in religious terms in was an anti-Greek. The Treaty of Berlin restored Macedonia to Turks and divided Bulgaria in two pieces. In the second stage of Balkan wars, with Treaty of Bucharest, Macedonia was divided between Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece.

After the First World War, the migration of population increased in that area, and with that also the fear of Greek of removing one of its most flourishing province with 1,5 million inhabitants. After the Second World War, Tito and Stalin created Yugoslavia, composed from six republics, including Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It has a population of 2 million inhabitants, a quarter Albanians (in the North-West region), a weak economy and industry. In 1991 Macedonians declared their independence,

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[9] *Ibidem.*

[10] *Ibidem,* pp. 339-340.

[11] *Ibidem*, pp. 354-355.

but Albanian boycotted the vote, and Greek prevented international recognition and there were serious concerns about this new state with several sources: one was the Greek civil war, when many Slav were recruited into the ranks of ELAS; there were suspicious regarding the interference in anything with the name Macedonia; reactions regarding the appearance in Skopje of ancient maps with Macedonia extended over Greece, or the reactions of political leaders from Athens regarding Alexander of Macedon. Macedonia was obliged to adopt the name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) before it was admitted to the UN and then in Republic of Northern Macedonia after longue negotiations with Greece, ended with historical Prespa Agreement reached on 2018. Northern Macedonia was on its right path to the UE, after its NATO accession on 2020, but Bulgaria blocked it, later that year.

Western Balkans could be considered "Europe in a small scale"[12], inviting us to analyze and identify the elements of European pluralistic model of diversity, and to reflect on the European values and standards.

1. The emergence of the new states after 1990

We can observed that profound transformations are the main features of the region in terms of democratizations and state-building, but an interesting approach belonged to Dorian Jano[13] who distinguished three processes: Last Balkanization, Delay Transition and Pre-Europeanization in the Western Balkans transformation:

Stages	**The "last" Balkanization**	**The "delay" transition**	**The "pre-" Europeanization**
The processes of	Nation- and State-building	Institution-building	Member-state building
Problems and challenges	Violent disintegration (dissolution&disorders)	Governance incapacity	Compliance (institution and policy adaptation)

[12] Woelk, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

[13] Dorian Jano, "From Balkanization to Europeanization", in *L'Europe en formation*, no. 349-350, automne-hiver 2008, pp. 56-69.

Causalities and mechanisms	Correlation between the homogeneity and acceptance of difference (state-citizens relations)	High uncertainty (because of modes of communism, role of EU and domestic political elites)	Conditionality (Pre-accession impact)

Table no. 1: The specific elements of processes of Balkans transformations (after Jano, 2008, p. 57).

The author used three specific elements: the domination of certain processes, the problems and challenges that appeared and the causes and mechanisms involved. For the first characteristic, it is important to see the commonalities with the Central and Eastern European countries, former communist countries, which experienced a double transformation: economic and political. Apart from this common feature, for Western Balkans region it was a process of nation and state building which determine the disintegration of whole region. Practically, the economic and political transformations, with democratic values and reforms were on the second places. The dissolution of ex-Yugoslavia came with conflicts, violence and victims. The above mentioned author develop the meaning of term "Balkanization", as a "fragmentation of larger political complexes into smaller […] antagonistic entities", something "contrary" to the western values or, in author's point of view, it is a softer version of the disintegration process from '90s, meant to be the last one[14]. The common element for the region was the weakness of the state. Woelk found some explanations: the Communist principle of democratic centralism and the concentration of power could be the elements which hampered the separation of power, the implementation of democratic reforms, rules of law, and the interpretation of interethnic relations[15]. For the management of the interethnic relations Woelk indicated the assumption of being the "very essence" of building a state in the region, with a political influence – a common approach with the former communist states from Central and

[14] *Ibidem*, p. 58.

[15] Woelk, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

Eastern Europe, with the difference that in the Western Balkans, the states were understood as of majority of population.

The second process indicated the transition to the market economy and a pluralist democracy, which implies the creation of the new institutions[16]. There are two dimensions to be taken into consideration: formal aspects of democracy (fair and free elections) – political dimension - and liberalization, stabilization and privatization – economic dimension[17].

Referring to the second specific element of the characterization of the three processes, the main challenges are: the establishing of liberal democracy and the citizens' identification of the state in a positive manner[18] (political dimension), the weak capacity of social actor and of civil society (social dimension) and the economic sustainable development (economical dimension)[19].

EU played an important role in reducing uncertainty of transition. The next natural step in the development of the region is the European accession, and two of the Balkans states succeeded (Slovenia and Croatia). There is a special symbolistic around the joining Europe moment[20]. Some authors argued that it was assimilated into political discourse of nationalistic forces of ethnic groups, claiming that some are more Europeans than others. But it comes to the use of the terms *European values*, there is a strong indicative for s stance of democracy. We can add, when we are referring to the EU's role in the region that it is a question of moral responsibility, and the founding fathers of European Union envisaged a wide economic integration, aiming to prevent another war in Europe[21].

But when it comes to answer to the question of ability in becoming member of EU and issues are getting more serious, since the conditionality, especially the rule of law, are the must-have conditions to be fulfilled. Some authors believed that European accession and integration could be considered the common element for the Western Balkans region[22], which

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[16] Jano, *op. cit.,* p. 61.

[17] *Ibidem*, apud Vladimir Gligorov, Mary Kaldor and Loukas Tsoukalis, *Balkan Reconstruction and European Integration*, The Hellenic Observatory, The European Institute, Centre for the Study of Global Governance, The London School of Economics and Political Science and Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies, October 1999, p. 17.

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 62.

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 63.

[20] Vladimir Gligorov, Mary Kaldor and Loukas Tsoukalis, *op. cit*., pp. 38-44.

[21] *Ibidem.*

[22] Dorian Jano, *op. cit.,* p. 66.

will become the "strategic inevitability"[23]. Besides these conditionalities that will have to be fulfilled, the main challenges will be the internalization of Europeanization's behavior, meaning a certain social conduits in respecting the norms, application of European policies, mechanisms and procedures. That is why we could consider the pre-Europeanization phase as a stage which favor the induction of this specific social behavior. In this process, the role of EU is crucial.

What is important for us to understand, when we are looking to this region and we are expecting the rapid adoption of certain political, social and economic behaviors is that each of the Western Balkans state needs time to adapt all of these European patterns and mechanisms to their own culture and collective conscience.

Another approach which contribute to a better understanding of this region belong to Daniel L. Bayman, who analyzed ethnic conflicts in different regions of the world and identified five important elements of analysis: control policies, cooptation, manipulation of ethnical identities, political participation and partion[24]. But a very interesting approach is offered by Boriana-Marinova Zuber[25] who proposes several alternative strategies for solving ethnic conflicts: (a) cultural legitimization of the historic heritage and of ethnic communities; (b) unifying symbolism and ideology – a common political culture or a "civic nationalism"; (c) federalism – in a sense of diving it from the politics.

Bieber is speaking about the appearance of the former authoritarian regimes in the 2000s, in the new forms of competitive authoritarism, which manifests in the new democratic and independent institutions and mechanisms[26] and is characterized by the presence of two features: (1)

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[23] *Ibidem*, apud Balkan Forum, *Integrating the Balkans: Regional Ownership and European Responsibilities*, Discussion paper, Bertelsmann Foundation and Center for Applied Policy Research and Policy Planning Staff , German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Berlin, July 2002, p. 6.

[24] Daniel L. Bayman, *Keeping the peace. Lasting solutions to ethnic conflicts*, Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002.

[25] Boriana-Marinova Zuber, *The Rebirth of Nationalism in the Balkans in the 1990s: Causes, Consequences and Possible Solutions*, International Relations and Security Network, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, 2007.

[26] Florian Bieber, "Patterns of competitive authoritarism in the Western Balkans", in *East European Politics*, no 34, vol 3, pp. 337-354, 2018, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2018.1490272, accessed on 24th of February 2021.

institutional weakness with insufficient safeguards and (2) authoritarian political actors who are using these weaknesses in order to be in power[27].

Not least, it is important to adopt the foreign policy perspective when we are referring to this region, concentrating on the concept of "role"[28] (which is directing us to the state identity issue and self-perception) or the role of external actors in the Western Balkans[29] (Russia, Turkey, China, Gulf states are filling the gaps left by United States, because of its different geostrategic interests and because of the incapacity of EU to come with more than the actual enlargement policy).

If *communism* and *nation* were the two pillars of Yugoslav federalism, it is important to see how this legacy will reflect on the birth and evolution of the new states of Western Balkans.

2. The assertion of state identities to the new states

By exploring the European identity in Balkan region, Aniseta Uraj[30] came up with an interesting constructivist approach of ambigous identity of Balkans. Therefore, the regional identity is a political construct and it is build in continuous interactions. Political orientations and collective perceptions limits the distinctions *self-other*. The interstate politics is another important regional element in the construction of Balkans identity and that the „negative image of Balkans" is the „product" of international politics[31]. Also, the author affirms that the instability in the region and the link with Europe is originated in two divisions: (1) between Christianity and Islam and (2) Roman Catholicism and Christian Orthodoxy, both of them with effects on th creation of the regional identity in Western Balkan. Not at least, historical influences are to be mentioned. The author spoke about the stigmas of the region in terms like „Turkey of Europe" (sec. XVIII-XIX), which became active after the disintegration of Yugoslavia,

[27] *Ibidem*, p. 338.

[28] Christina Griessler, "The V4 Countries' Foreign Policy concerning the Western Balkans", in *Politics in Central Europe*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 141-164, DOI: 10.2478/pce-2018-0013, accessed on 25th of February 2021.

[29] Lars Hänsel, Florian C. Fereyabend, *The influence of external actors in the western Balkans. A map of geopolitical players*, Berlin: Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2018, p. 4

[30] Aniseta Uraj, *European Identity in Balkans. The case of Croatia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Master's Thesis, Tallin University of Technology, School of Business and Governance, 2018, p. 25.

[31] *Ibidem.*

under the name of „Balkanization". So, we have the arguments of old collective images, and of the use of external actors of the ethnicity and local ethnicity for the nation-state creation process. Practically, the author is trying to demonstrate us that the „normal process" of state-building by transforming the local units into political identities, integrated with the state structures, facilitated by the state-to-state cooperation could had favoured the political understanding and integration of Balkans into the European politics and power system[32]. In the end, Uraj is pleading for impartiality of analysis of the regional identity and not overuse the stereotypes.

Situating in today's context, a consistent and interesting approach of placing Western Balkans has Cupać[33]. She considers that the main characteristic of nowaday society is anxiety, and that is why she is elaborating an anxiety dillema, but using the concept of ontological security. This dillema is indicated a situation of social order which provide for one group the sense of ontological security and which is felt by another group as source of anxiety and its characterized of nowadays society, in which are trapped the supporters and, also, the contesters of liberal globalization and international order. But specific for the Western Balkans is the ambivalency of its position, which combine liberal-democratic justifications with autocratic tendencies. The ambivalent position of Western Balkans has at its basis four reasons: the authoritarian legacy of the region; combination between ethno-nationalism and nation- and state-building processes; the search for external legitimacy and the „EU-abandonament" of the link between peace and democracy. Of course that the regional and local influences are located into the global ones, as well as the effects of the „contemporary" anxiety.

Woelk[34] said that pluralistic principle is applied differently, according to the situations. For the Western Balkans, he identified two contrasting approaches with influence on state-building: the only solution for accomodating ethnic differences and ethnic homogenity is the harmonization of territorial and institutional divisions (the „realistic" approach) and the (re-) construction of multi-ethnic society, by applying

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[32] *Ibidem.*

[33] Jelena Cupać, "The Anxiety Dilemma: Locating the Western Balkans in the Age of Anxiety", in *Journal of Security*, Belgrade Center for Security, vol. 15, no. 1, 2020, pp. 7-38

[34] Jeans Woelk, *op. cit*, p. 195.

the democratic principles, the rule of law, respecting the human rights, all of these creating the basis for a long term peaceful living („idealistic" approach). Recognition of diversity represents the common element of these approaches.

Considering territory and ethnicity, appliying legal instruments in different contexts represent solutions for the organization of a peaceful living in the region. One good example offered by Woelk [35] is the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), from 2001, for Northern Macedonia, regarding the denial of any link between territory and ethnicity – „There are no territorial solution for ethnic issues – ART 1.2. OFA"[36] and that targets the inclusion of Albanian minority at centraland local level.

There many other ways of reconsiliating the territorial pluralism and socio-cultural diversity and the representation in Parliament is one of them. For example, in Macedonia, there is a special formula used in order to encourage the minority representation or the veto rights for minorities[37].

Another interesting model to be used is called „face-to-face" or „facing the past" and it was developed by Lea David[38]. She is using face-to-face dialogues between representatives of different ethnic and religious groups as methods of reconciliation and considering that by hearing narratives within group the anxiety/fear will be reduced and also stereotyes and misconceptions. The method is based on the psychological healing by transformations and „facing the past" is an „insurance policy" which will prevent the recurrence of conflicts and violence.

It seems like EU needs to find new means for replicated the succesfully accession and, in some cases, integration of the Central and South Eastern states in Balkans region. The political developments in Balkan region raises questions regarding the effectiveness of political conditional and of external promotion of democracy [39].

[35] *Ibidem*, pp. 195-196.

[36] *Ibidem.*

[37] *Ibidem*, pp. 198-199.

[38] Lea David, Historical narratives as foundations for ethnicized identities: "facing the past" encounters in the Western Balkans and in Israel/Palestine", in *East European Politics*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2019, pp. 415-432, DOI: 10.1080/21599165.2019.1616545, accessed on 25th of February 2021.

[39] Tina Freyburg and Solveigh Richter, "National Identity Matters: The Limited Impact of EU Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans", in J*ournal of European Public Policy*, 2010, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 263-281.

3. The issue of relations between states in redefining identity as part of the values and criteria of European accession

For a better understanding of the context of the Northern Macedonia accession to the EU, it is worth mentioning the differences of approaches appeared on the historical perpectives, acording to the nationality of the authors[40]. There are three external actors with major influence for this understanding: Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia - the tripartite split of Macedonia that emerged after the Second Balkan War (1913) survived two World Wars up to the present day:

- Aegean Macedonia went to Greece;
- Pirin Macedonia went to Bulgaria and
- Vardar Macedonia went to Serbia (succeeded by Yugoslavia, then by the Republic of Macedonia).

During the interwar period, Serbs, Greeks and Bulgarians were united in denying a Macedonian identity: Bulgaria designated Macedonians their own, Serbia claimed them "South Serbians", while Greece named them "Slavophone Greeks". Societies very often try to define their identity in a negative context, through distinction "from" or comparing "with" neighbors and „who we are very often means who we are not"[41].

The recognizion as a nation had difficult challenges from the neighbouring states: with Bulgaria refusing to recognize the Macedonian language and nation, with the Serb Orthodox Church refusing to accept the autonomy of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, and with Greece strongly opposing to the self-styled name of the new state and hence delaying its intern[42].

Respectig the minorities (the Albanian minority especially) determined a change in the preamble of Macedonian Constitution in order

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[40] Stojan Slaveski and Atanas Kozarev, "'Europeanization' of the Macedonian National Identity", *The Western Balkans Policy Review*, Volume 2, Issue 1, Winter/Spring 2012, pp. 21-38, Internet source available at http://www.kppcenter.org/wbpreview.html, accessed on 24th of November 2020; Dejan Marolov, "The relations between Macedonia and Serbia", *RJHIS*, 2015, no. 2, pp. 117-128; Victor Roudometof, "Nationalism and Identity Politics in the Balkans: Greece and the Macedonian Question", in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 14, no.2, pp. 253-301.

[41] Stojan Slaveski and Atanas Kozarev, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

[42] *Ibidem.*

to reflect a multicultural society[43]. This helped the Macedonia for the meta-perception of national identity abroad and its effects on foreign policy[44]. But a new important dimension in defining a minority is the political community: „When do we speak of a minority? This is a political issue, not simply an issue of a different language and the adherence to different customs from that of dominant nationality" [45]. The main elements that characterized a minority from political perspectives are:

a) the public claim to membership of an ethno cultural nation, different from the dominant one;

b) the demand for state recognition as a minority group;

c) the assertion of rights based on such recognition, which involves certain collective rights, cultural and/or political [46].

The current status of bilateral relations of Northern Macedonia with its neighbors are:

- with Albania – solved the issue of Albanian minority with the *Law for the minorities*, committed for cooperation According to Framework Agreement, Ohrid Agreement, cooperation with Stabilization and Association Council;
- with Greece – by closing the historical Prespa Agreement on 12th of June 2018;
- Bulgaria – still challenging bilateral relation, recently opposing for opening the talks for accession;
- Serbia – still have some challenges and difficulties, generated from recently accession to the NATO structures, some issues with Serbian Orthodox Church and mutual recognition of minorities.

This situation has to be understood in the dynamicity of the political context, which favor a lots of forwarding steps to the European path.

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[43] *Ibidem*, p. 24.

[44] *Ibidem*, apud Ilya Prizel, *National Identity and Foreign Policy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[45] Erika Harris, *Nationalism and democratization: Politics of Slovakia and Slovenia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

[46] Rogers Brubaker, "National Minorities, Nationalizing States and External Homelands in the New Europe", *Daedalus*, vol. 124, no. 2, 1995, p. 112.

4. The current European perspectives on the Western Balkans

The COVID-19 pandemic did not spare the Western Balkans. The final extent of its footprint in terms of loss of human lives and damage to the economies is still difficult to assess, but early estimates foresee a drop of between 4 and 6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the region. Thousands of citizens are at risk of losing their jobs, and temporary government support measures (unemployment benefits, deferrals/waivers to tax and social security contributions, etc.) have an important fiscal impact[47].

EU is also treating the region as privileged partners by associating them with the Union's mechanisms and instruments. These include the Health Security Committee, Joint Procurement Agreements, Union Civil Protection Mechanism, Solidarity Fund, consular assistance in repatriation or exemption from temporary EU export restrictions of medical equipment. All of these and other measures sent a clear message of the EU's political commitment towards the region[48].

The recently report released by European Commission on Northern Macedonia had some important criteria: political, public administration, judicial system, fight against corruption, fight against organized crime, fundamental rights, freedom of expression, regional cooperation, mixed migration flows and economic criteria. The same report made an evaluation of the accession chapters:

- regarding the ability to assume the obligations of membership, the country continues to be ***moderately prepared*** in most areas: competition, public procurement, statistics, financial control, transport, energy.
- it shows a ***good level of preparation*** in areas such as : company law, customs union, trans-European networks and science and research.
- it is at an ***early stage of preparation*** in areas such as free movement of workers as well as financial and budgetary provisions. It needs to focus more on administrative capacity and effective

[47] European Commission, *North Macedonia 2020 Report Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, 6.10.2020, p. 3.
[48] *Ibidem.*

implementation and to improve its alignment with the EU common foreign and security policy.

Still, there are important steps followed by Northern Macedonia in its long way to the European Union and it is important to mention them:

Year	Important moment
November 2020	***Ministers failed to adopt a negotiating framework for North Macedonia***
26th of March 2020	Members of the European Council endorsed the conclusions
25th of March 2020	Conclusions on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process were formally adopted by written procedure
24th of March 2020	Ministers for European affairs gave their political agreement to the opening of accession negotiations with Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia
June 2019	Council discussed the European Commission's communication of 29 May 2019 on the EU Enlargement Policy
December 2005	European Council awarded the country ***candidate status***
9th of November 2005	Commission delivered a positive opinion
22nd of March 2004	Application for EU membership
1999	Stabilisation and Association Process

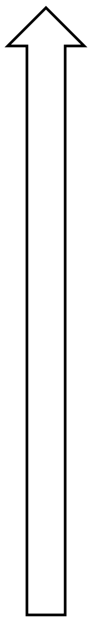


Table no. 2: The accession steps to the EU made by Northern Macedonia

It is a hard road for Northern Macedonia to the EU, the last opposition came from a neighboring state, Bulgaria. We believe that understanding better the historical context, spoken by specialists belonging to nations from the region will help us, Europeans to prospect better the mechanisms which will support better the European Enlargement Policy.

5. Conclusions

No solution can therefore be a radical one, but only the result of gradual change. Instruments are required which permit evolution and adaptation of the single local realities for avoiding new instability. Incentives are needed for change.

The political determination from the EU institutions, including the position of the German Presidency of the Council was evident in favor of opening the accession. Respecting the European values, adopting the European way of life and dialogue (intercultural living together) will create, with local solutions, a better context for improving the bilateral relations in the region, in order to create the premises for fulfilling the aspiration of EU membership.

It looks as though the transformative implication on EU in the region is not enough. If membership criteria are clear, conditionality works. Also, if all the criteria works for all applicants, if the progresses are strictly monitored, and with a fair and transparent attitude from European partners (institutions and Member States) exist, then expected results have to follow[49]. Because the accession and integration process will mean for Balkans region improvement in the quality of life for all citizens, regardless of their nationality or territories.

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[49] Marko Kmezić, "Recalibrating the EU's Approach to the Western Balkans", in *European View*, Wilfried Martens Center, vol. 19, no. 1, 2020, pp. 54-61.

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THE CONTINUOUS SWING BETWEEN EAST AND WEST AS A CHALLENGE FOR SERBIA

Roth Greta-Diana

Introduction

The Western Balkans are a region of strategic importance to the European continent. The region has potential in terms of development in various sectors by addressing the principles of democracy and European values, while continuing challenges posed by sources of insecurity, frozen conflicts, internal tensions or interstate tensions.

Even if from a territorial point of view the region is relatively small, its importance stems from its geographical location, being an important consideration in the strategic decisions of strong players. In this sense, the Balkans have aroused not only the interest of the European Union, but also that of Russia, China and the Persian Gulf states, which seek to expand their economic and political influence by shaping different political games.

Serbia stands out in the region as having considerable potential in the democratic path to accession to the European Union, but at the same time it is overshadowed by its ongoing ties and relations with Russia and China.

In today's globalized world, regardless of the declared interests of international actors, powerful states or international organizations seek to expand their influence and power. Even if at present we cannot speak of hegemony, actions that derive from it, like the balance of power can be visibly observed in different corners of the world. In this sense, the Western Balkans are not bypassed, but on the contrary, they become a fertile ground for the clash of these interests.

Starting from the neorealist theory, the actors regard power as a means of security, and for this reason they tend to expand. On the other hand, anarchy is the one that generates security dilemmas, and the counterweight comes here as an effective model through which actors use different capabilities to compensate for the actions of a potential hegemon[1].

In this regard, the clash of influences, interests and objectives for the Western Balkans region is a visible example of how the region is becoming

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[1] Stuart J. Kaufman, Richard Little and William C. Wohlforth, *The Balance of Power in World History*, Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 8-9.

a strategic and geopolitical interest of the European Union, Russia and China. Serbia, the most prominent state in the region, is in a constant balance between the political intentions declared by Belgrade's policy makers and the strong ties it maintains with its eastern partners, which is why its actions not only raise questions about real intentions, but also undermines its credibility internationally.

The importance of the European Union

The process of accession to the European Union is the best opportunity for the states of the Western Balkans to transform into stable and prosperous democracies, where the rule of law is a governing element. At the same time, for some states with aspirations to join, the path they follow is often a road to nowhere, there is often dissatisfaction with the way they are treated. Since the end of the war in Kosovo, democratic reforms have brought the Western Balkan states closer to the European Union[2]. And now, for the first time in modern history, the Balkan Peninsula has the opportunity to coexist under the same umbrella of security and stability where the European Union and NATO are the main actors. However, Western leaders have faced a multitude of political, economic, social and ethno-cultural tensions and disputes that have greatly blurred the historical vision and progress of the Western Balkan states[3].

In an attempt to keep the accession negotiation process alive, the European Commission has made efforts to make it as credible as possible. Progress is on paper, but on closer inspection, in countries such as Serbia, changes and progress are very slow[4]. If state-building is incomplete and contested, democratic progress becomes difficult. Incomplete, conflicted and contested states are real challenges for European integration, where the EU's focus, beyond state consolidation and economic reform, seeks to focus on institutional legitimacy and regional stability[5].

The European Union has the capacity to use more effective instruments than Beijing or Moscow, because it can build institutional

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[2] Henri Bohnet, *Can Serbia let go of Kosovo? The Key question for Balkan stability*, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, 2012, p. 24.

[3] Janusz Bugajski, *Challenges to European Integration and US disengagement*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2013, p. 1.

[4] Sabina Lange, Zoran Nechev and Florian Trauner, „Resilience in the Western Balkans”, in *EU Institute for Security Studies*, Report No. 36, 2017, p. 81.

[5] Janusz Bugajski, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

frameworks, comprehensive cooperation agreements and long-term relationships by setting standards according to European values[6].

Most often, EU accession is considered the best tool to promote human rights in the former Soviet states, as does the Western Balkan states. The promotion of human rights is the central element of foreign policy, to which is added democratization as a normative objective, and which reflects the relationship with states and the specific way in the policy of enlargement[7].

Candidate states must be assured that they will receive the promised rewards after meeting the requirements given by Brussels, but these rewards must only come if they actually meet the requirements. The credibility of the European Union's conditioning is the major difference used between aesthetic enlargement and the enlargement strategy used for the Western Balkans[8].

Compared to other states in the region, Serbia's accession to the European Union is much more specific, as Chapter 35 deals with negotiating issues relating to the integrity of the state and its sovereignty over the entire territory within internationally recognized state borders. Although various ideas on the constitutional review of Kosovo and Metohija's state policy have been presented over time, no workable solution has been reached because there is no two-thirds majority in parliament to approve such a change, while citizens would reject this decision in a referendum. At the same time, a preamble as a non-normative part of the Constitution would not represent a formal or material obstacle to Serbia's full accession to the EU, but could complement the other documents on which the accession negotiations are based[9].

New developments have weakened the EU's power in the region, even among the candidate countries, most recently in October 2019, when the French veto weakened the EU's commitment to enlargement. Actions by France (and others) have raised doubts among Western Balkan countries about their future prospects and have put a brake on EU foreign policy.

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[6] Mathieu Duchâtel and François Godement, *Absorb and Conquer: an EU approach to Russian and Chinese Integration in Eurasia*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 12.

[7] Teresa Maria Cierco, „Human Rights promotion in Serbia: a difficult task for the European Union”, in *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, Nr. 54, 2011, p. 142.

[8] *Ibidem*, pp. 146-148.

[9] Vladimir Dzamic și Zaklina Spalevic, *Main Constitutional Obstacles to the Membership of Serbia in the European Union*, Singidunum University, Belgrade, 2017, p. 937.

The fact that France has called for a review of enlargement policy has led to a slowdown in the Balkan integration process and in a survey conducted in Serbia, 66% of citizens believe they will not enter the EU until 2030[10].

The future of the Western Balkans has been marginalized in the European Union's foreign policy by the wide range of events it has gone through in the last decade, thus marking the political trajectory with urgent and important issues. As EU activity has begun to decline in the Western Balkans region, to which is added the set of different political conditions, new opportunities have opened up for other actors to engage in the region, through the economic, political and strategic side[11].

Russia's implications

Russia has become increasingly determined to fuel Serbian nationalism by creating "Greater Serbia", underlined by nostalgic imperialism in Russia's vision of uniting the Slavic and Orthodox peoples in a union of interests. On the other hand, China, driven by the old imperial nostalgia, brings massive and non-discriminatory investments in regional infrastructure to gain leverage in economic markets without worrying about Western European integration and democratization[12].

Through Sputnik and Russia Today, propaganda activity increased, reaching the majority of Serbs, especially through the deep connection between Serbia and Russia. We must not forget the fact that this population still has NATO as an enemy in its memory. Russia's combined efforts, along with Russian banking enterprises and the existence of Russian paramilitary organizations in Serbia, have a significant potential in influencing Serbia's desire for European integration. At the same time, Russia still has an interest in forcing Belgrade into NATO integration, even though it has a substantially lesser influence on European integration[13].

After Kosovo declared independence in 2008, Russia saw the action as a US-led attempt to further diminish the power of Serbia, its traditional

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[10] Horvat Morvai, „Serbia, the Last Car on Balkan Express”, in *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, No. 1, Vol. 17, 2008, p. 4.

[11] Peter van Ham, *The EU's Problematic Track Record in the Western Balkans: Why the EU Must acknowledge its Limits*, Clingendael Institute, 2014, pp. 14-15.

[12] Ian Hope, *The Western Balkans and the Revenge of History*, NATO Defense College, 2017, p. 5.

[13] Mark Galeotti, *Do the Western Balkans face a coming Russian Storm*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2018, p. 16.

ally in the region, which was already weakening. While in 2015, the European Union was concerned about the situation of refugees, Russia found an opportunity to strengthen its relations with Belgrade. As Serbia continues to face economic difficulties following the 2008-2009 crisis, Moscow's leadership has not missed a chance to offset the prospect of EU membership[14].

Moscow has sought to increase its influence in Serbia and Kosovo through three main areas. In the first, through media channels, she supported a narrative that presented Russia as a closer ally than the EU or the US, and the dispute between Belgrade and Pristina was portrayed as a religious war between Orthodox Christians and Muslims. The main source in pro-Kremlin disinformation campaigns among Serbian-language foreign media agencies remains Sputnik, which uses both news portals and social media. The second area is related to strategic control in various sectors of the Serbian economy, such as energy or the banking sector. Through the construction of TurkStream in Serbia, Russia is increasing its influence in the energy sector, and manages to expand to other countries in the region. In the third area, Russia is trying to become a key player in the stability of the region, especially in the Serbia-Kosovo dispute, to score a point against the West. This is exemplified by the meeting between Vladimir Putin and Kosovo President Hashim Thaci in 2018, which highlights Moscow's plan to gain influence on all sides, despite the fact that it does not recognize Kosovo's independence. Moreover, the Serbian-Russian Humanitarian Center in Nis is a source of tension between Belgrade and Brussels, as it is suspected of conducting intelligence activities in the country for the Kremlin[15].

Russia manages to push the alternative idea of the Slavic-Orthodox fraternity, taking advantage of the background of anti-Western sentiments, and even if it is a cheap model, it is still effective in influencing the target communities[16]. Serbia's ties with Russia are economically important due to its almost complete dependence on natural gas imports and the bilateral free trade agreement signed in 2000, which will expire when Serbia joins

[14] Maria Giulia Amadio Vicere, "The Future Is Back: The EU, Russia and the Kosovo—Serbia Dispute", *Istituto Affari Internazionali*, 2019, pp. 6-7.

[15] *Ibidem*, pp. 12-13.

[16] Asya Metodieva, *Russain Narrative Proxies in the Western Balkans*, German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2019, p.3.

European Union, but until then it is trying to exploit profitable relations with Russia[17].

By supporting Serbia in its disputes with Kosovo, Russia has strengthened its image as a protector of the Serbian state's interests at the international level. This support is seen as one of the main ways in which Russia is expanding its interests in Serbia and the region. Russia is taking advantage of opportunities to expand its presence, while Serbia is playing the card of Russian support to show the European Union and the United States that it has an alternative, threatening to approach Russia whenever it is dissatisfied with it Western implications or the accession process[18].

The visits of Russian decision-makers, such as Putin in 2019 or Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in 2018, are of strategic importance, especially since these commitments are considered a high-performing art that allows Moscow to maintain its influence in Balkans and allows it to strengthen perceptions among Serbs that Russia remains a good alternative for the West[19].

At the same time, the scenario in which Russia tacitly encourages Serbia's ambitions to join the EU must be taken into account, especially since Russia has so far not publicly and directly opposed Serbia's European accession. The motivation behind it can be given by Russia's hopes of having a Trojan horse in the EU. Although the reasons are difficult to verify, Russia may find further benefits following Serbia's possible EU accession[20].

Some analysts see Serbia as putting pressure on the European Union and using this tool to speed up the accession process and at the same time recalling that Russia remains the second option for Serbia. Broadly speaking, Serbia can use Russia as a tool for regional political negotiation, especially on the issue of the status of Kosovo and the Republika Srpska and on European policy, i.e., EU accession. However, it is important to note

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[17] Jovan Teokarevic, *Absorb and Conquer: an EU approach to Russian and Chinese Integration in Eurasia*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, pp. 58-59.

[18] Branislav Radeljic, "Serbia's EU Future: Concerns and Perspectives", in *Disintegration and Integration in East-Central Europe: 1919 – post-1989*, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2014, p. 290.

[19] Paul Stronski and Annie Himes, *Russia's Game in the Balkans*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019, p. 14.

[20] Arlinda Rrustemi and Mihailo Jovetic, *The Role of the Netherlands in EU Enlargement Processes: A Potential Stallerto the EU's External Stability*, Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2019, p. 114.

that the Serbian foreign and defense policies of the Belgrade government must be amortized with the EU's common security and defense policy towards Russia, especially if it wants to join[21].

Moscow also comes to exploit the religious and cultural leverage through the Orthodox Church. This process is leading to an improvement in the status of Orthodoxy in the region, especially with the Serbian Orthodox Church. The latter has a significant role in the state in that it has managed to maintain relations with every senior politician in Serbia since independence[22].

Serbia, the state in the Western Balkans with the closest religious alignment with Russia, transcends Russia's activities, especially as there are spiritual ties between Orthodox Christians, regardless of cooperation between the Serbian and Russian Orthodox Churches. After 2008, relations intensified with substantial support for the reconstruction of Serbian churches in Kosovo. In these projects, the Russian influence is obvious, especially since there is a chapel in Iversk that contains the name of Vladimir Putin[23] [24].

Russia's cultural and historical ties with the region are often exaggerated. Russia's commitment to the Western Balkans was traditionally based on influencing European security issues, which may be an argument for Russian support for extreme right-wing groups, especially since this serves to exacerbate social and political fissures[25].

Finally, Russia's influence in Serbia is significant in the security sphere, as it seeks to distance both Serbia and the Western Balkan states from the West. These actions take place through military partnerships, support for paramilitary and far-right groups, by strengthening anti-EU and NATO sentiments, trying to undermine any Western ally in the region. As it seeks to distance Serbia from the West, it is consolidating its power in

[21] Andrew Konitzer, „Serbia between East and West", in *Russian History*, Nr. 1, Vol. 38, 2011, pp. 112-116.

[22] Arlinda Rrustemi and Mihailo Jovetic, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

[23] Dušan Reljić, "The Impact of Russia", in *Resilience in the Western Balkans, European Union Institute for Security Studies*, 2017, p. 48.

[24] Francisco de Borja Lasheras, Vessela Tcherneva and Fredrik Wesslau, *Return to instability: how migration and power politics threaten the Western Balkans*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 9.

[25] Andrew Konitzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-118.

the state and region, using mechanisms of hybrid warfare, using political, religious, cultural, economic and security instruments[26].

China's implications

Serbia leaves room for China, a real and future investor in infrastructure, because it is not able to make too many investments from its own funds. Serbia, due to its central position in the Western Balkans, expects to play an important role in the One Belt One Road project, raising the current level of projects that China has to 3 billion euros in the near future[27]. Serbia has long been one of China's main partners in Europe, playing an important role in the 16 + 1 format, China's multilateral mechanism with 16 countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The status of strategic partners between Serbia and China was achieved after President Xi Jinping's visit to Serbia in 2016. A bilateral visa-free entry regime for visits of no more than one month has recently been introduced, illustrating a strong link between the two and it is the first of its kind with a European country[28].

Serbia understands China's power, both politically and economically. After 2009, in response to the changes that took place, and to the visible growth of China as the future economic leader in the world, Serbia began to establish strategic relations with China, being one of the main objectives of its diplomacy. As a result of the global financial crisis, the deepening of Chinese-Serbian ties continued as Serbia sought alternatives to help its economy[29].

Serbia's geographical position gives it strategic importance, as it is at a crossroads between the European Union, Southeast Europe and Asia, making it a key logistical hub for air, rail, road and sea transport, but more chosen as a valuable component for the One Belt One Road initiative. China has the chance to capitalize on Serbia's strategic position by developing transport link network projects connecting Serbia with various

[26] Arlinda Rrustemi and Mihailo Jovetic, *op. cit.*, p. 128.
[27] Jovan Teokarevic, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
[28] Angela Stanzel and Agatha Kratz, *China's investment in influence: the future of 16+1 cooperation*, European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016, p. 12.
[29] Liu Zuokui, "China's Investment in the Balkans under the Belt and Road Initiative: A Chinese Perspective", in *Insight Turkey*, Nr. 2, Vol. 21, 2019, pp. 93-94.

logistics and trade centers in both Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in trade and transport flows in Western Asia and North Africa[30].

The wide openness for Chinese enterprises is mainly due to Serbia's lack of funding and expertise in developing certain sectors. The combined value for joint infrastructure projects in Serbia is higher than in any other EEC country[31].

The Chinese involvement in the region is difficult to classify as negative or positive. On the one hand, on the positive side, China's investments had an immediate impact, as was the example of the acquisition of the steel plant in eastern Serbia, Zelezara Smederevo, which saved more than 5,000 jobs and showed the political goodwill between China and Serbia, while Chinese investment has begun to be viewed positively by local people and is considered visionary. On the downside, in addition to the perpetuated debt diplomacy in the region, there are questions about corrupt practices, mismanagement and security failures. China is increasingly present in the region because Serbia needs infrastructure and a connectivity agenda, and infrastructure costs are very high. While many European Union countries receive EU funding, Western Balkan states are not eligible for it[32].

Interest from Chinese companies is growing sharply in investments in sectors such as the production of construction materials and electrical materials or consumer goods. To date, Serbia has engaged in $ 5 billion in projects, raising questions about the impact of Chinese investment on the EU accession process. At the same time, the EU is trying to discuss with potential members in the region the harmonization of rules and regulations, which means a request to align Chinese investment with EU rules[33].

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[30] Gabriela Pleschov, "China's Engagement in Central and Eastern Europe: Regional Diplomacy in Pursuit of China's Interests", *in International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs*, No. 3, Vol. 24, 2015, pp. 23-24.

[31] Heather Conley, *The Western Balkans' Strategic Value, in China's "Hub-and-Spoke" Strategy in the Balkans*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2020, p. 4.

[32] Philippe Le Corre, *Serbia: The Open-Door Balkan Space, in China's Rise as a Geoeconomic Influencer: Four European Case Studies*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2018, pp. 30-33.

[33] Sandra Esser, *„Development Bank Financing in the Western Balkans", High Carbon Lock-in VS. Low Carbon Opportunity in the Western Balkans: Critical Investments and the Eu Accession Process*, E3G, 2018, pp. 28-30.

China's main economic commitment is through loans, not subsidies or foreign aid, such as the EU's model of supporting Western Balkan states. EU aid can increase the region's attractiveness to the Union and offset China's long-term impact. Although Chinese funding flows may increase in the region in the future, the European Union remains by far the most economically strong in the region, despite perceptions compared to the East[34].

Political influence can be likened to war strategies, where Chinese-led diplomacy hides its objectives in a political conflict, which captures the elite, which can be seen in high-level corruption and discourse management through various think tanks and partner organizations. For Serbia, the result shows an infiltration of China's political influence in both the ruling and opposition parties[35].

Chinese economic investment, combined with long-term political ties, can become a significant political lever, bringing new challenges to corruption and the likelihood of the corrupt elite securing long-term power, with the possibility of moving to an authoritarian political model. EU officials have noted that the risk of corruption is significant and fears of Chinese projects prone to corruption and not meeting local needs are growing. If indebted states cannot pay their debts, this will have a political effect for the future. As a result, it is possible that current elites will maintain their power in the long run and could turn states into authoritarian ones, reflecting China's political model. In the same vein, EU officials pointed out that some infrastructure projects may not connect the Western Balkans with the EU due to incompatibility with Union standards[36].

Other researchers in the field have pointed out that China's role can also be seen as an alignment with the European Union. Chinese influence can be overestimated, and the geographical distance between China and the Western Balkans shows that it is too far away to exert its influence in the same way that the West does. China is not trying to prevent states from joining the EU, because accession would facilitate safer investment, and

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[34] Graham Hollinshead, "Chinese Overseas Foreign Direct Investment and the Sino-Serbian Strategic Partnership", in *Work Organisation, Labour & Globalisation*, No. 1, Vol. 8, 2014, pp. 42-44.

[35] Plamen Tonchev, "China's Road: into the Western Balkans", *European Union Institute for Security Studies*, 2017, pp. 4-5.

[36] Arlinda Rrustemi and Mihailo Jovetic, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

involvement in the EU would be a way to boost ties with it. Balkan leaders do not necessarily see China as an alternative to the European Union; and on the other hand, China can take advantage of the level of political stability to expand its economic interests. In the future, this may change, especially if China's interests deviate from those of the EU, and there will be an increasing risk of using hybrid tools or even an information confrontation. At present, China is cautious about the economic involvement of European states, because it depends on it in the Western Balkans region. But in the short term, China is not seen as a threat to either the EU or the Balkan states, while in the long run there may be a change in interests and relations, especially as countries in the region seek accession[37].

For now, there is no strong indication that the Beijing government is seeking to use its economic influence to cause political instability in the region, as this could adversely affect the One Belt One Road initiative. Developments can be seen as negative in Serbia because they would increase corruption and in turn ensure the power of today's elites. This type of elite could be part of the EU and would support the Chinese state internally and externally, undermining Western legitimacy in the long run[38].

How the COVID-19 crisis highlighted Serbia's intentions

The last year has seen various events that have exemplified Serbia's actions in terms of foreign policy guidelines very well. The pandemic crisis has highlighted how Belgrade decision-makers have chosen to build their fame on the part of the population based on the international aid they receive.

“European solidarity does not exist. That was a fairy tale on paper. I have sent a special letter to the only ones who can help, and that is China…”. This was the phrase underlined by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic in mid-March 2020, directly pointing out that he is turning his eyes to China because the EU has been absent from providing help[39]

The beginning of March and the onset of the Covid-19 crisis was the biggest challenge for the European continent in 2020. Unpreparedness,

[37] Liu Zuokui, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-101.

[38] Arlinda Rrustemi and Mihailo Jovetic, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

[39] *Serbia turns to China due to 'lack of EU solidarity' on coronavirus* - https://www.euractiv.com/section/china/news/serbia-turns-to-china-due-to-lack-of-eu-solidarity-on-coronavirus/, accessed on 06.02.2021.

both politically and health and economically, has had immediate effects on many states, even the strongest. When the European Union announced that it restricts the export of medical equipment outside the Community bloc[40], negative feelings were not long in coming, along with the opportunities of states with divergent interests in the immediate vicinity of the EU and questions about the values and promises of European support guaranteed only by membership.

Shortly after Vucic's political statements, billboards bearing the message "Thank you brother Xi" filled Belgrade with thanks for the immediate help provided by China, which consisted of experts and medical equipment[41]. Slowly but surely, what would later be called China's "mask diplomacy" began to form, and not just in Serbia. In general, the "steel friendship" between Serbia and China highlighted by the pandemic crisis only continues the very good bilateral relations that the two enjoy[42].

Of course, reactions in Europe were to match, especially since Josep Borrell, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, stressed that the aid the EU has given Serbia and the region in general is not so much praised such as China's recent intervention[43].

With these political statements, questions about Serbia's real intentions began to arise. Serbia, a candidate for the European Union, is also the one that criticizes its absence at a critical time even for the European Union. The relationship with China, flourishing until the appearance of the pandemic, has acquired a new meaning that during 2020 continued to be strengthened and emphasized. Vucic played the card of the alternative, showing the European Union not only that it does not show solidarity with the Balkan partners, but also that it receives the help it needs from miles away, even from China. On the other hand, China has used Serbia in the regional geopolitical game and strengthened its position

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[40] *EU moves to limit exports of medical equipment outside the bloc* - https://www.politico.eu/article/coronavirus-eu-limit-exports-medical-equipment/, accessed on 06.02.2021.

[41] *Serbia sets the stage for Beijing's mask diplomacy* - https://www.euractiv.com/section/china/news/serbia-sets-the-stage-for-beijings-mask-diplomacy/, accessed on 06.02.2021.

[42] *Serbia's Balancing Act on China* - https://chinaobservers.eu/serbias-balancing-act-on-china/, accessed on 06.02.2021.

[43] Josep Borrell, *It is funny how only China receives billboards of gratitude in Serbia* - https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/04/21/borrell-it-is-funny-how-only-china-receives-billboards-of-gratitude-in-serbia/, accessed on 06.02.2021.

and influence, and turned the blame for the spread of COVID-19 virus into devotion to states in need.

The helping presence of China did not stop here. Accelerated vaccine production by several states has given hope after a tumultuous year. On January 16, 2021, Serbia received 500,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccine from China, making it the first country in Europe to use the Sinopharm vaccine[44]. The delayed COVAX vaccination system[45] has allowed large producers to enter the market of needs and once again become the key savior.

In this sense, Russia has not been forgotten in Serbia's foreign aid orientation. Even though the vaccine doses given by Russia were significantly lower than the Chinese one, reaching 50,000 doses initially[46], the strategic importance behind this action was what mattered. In the same note as the relationship with China, Serbia extends its friendly relationship with Russia beyond political support and economic aid, updating itself to contemporary realities, intensifying its relations through medical support provided by Russia, which was not limited to vaccine, but included medical equipment and specialists[47]. The intentions played a geopolitical role, reaffirming Russia's positive interests in Serbia and its citizens.

Conclusions

Serbia's regional position gives it importance through the interest of strong actors seeking to expand their influences in the region or in its immediate vicinity. Serbia's hopes for accession are hampered by its own actions. The Belgrade leadership, which continues to emphasize its aspirations for EU membership in political statements or by participating in various international forums but is absent in actions to demonstrate these statements.

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[44] *Serbia receives million doses of China's Sinopharm COVID-19 vaccine* - https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-serbia-china-vacci-idUSKBN29L0EV, accessed on 06.02.2021.

[45] *Serbia to receive 1.8 mln units of COVID-19 vaccine by end-2021 - Vucic* - https://seenews.com/news/serbia-to-receive-18-mln-units-of-covid-19-vaccine-by-end-2021-vucic-720538, accessed on 06.02.2021.

[46] *Serbia receives 50,000 more Sputnik V vaccines* - https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/en/167426/serbia-receives-50000-more-sputnik-v-vaccines.php, accessed on 06.02.2021.

[47] *COVID-19: Russia sends doctors, supplies to Serbia* - https://www.aa.com.tr/en/health/covid-19-russia-sends-doctors-supplies-to-serbia/1791013, accessed on 06.02.2021.

Serbia is following its own interests, taking advantage of the interests of the great powers. In this regard, it seeks to strengthen the stability of the country, and of the Belgrade regime, which is not entirely part of a democratic framework, and thus Moscow's support and backing is not long in coming. Even if these relations are traditional, they do not bring prosperity and democratic progress to Serbia, but rather attract it to an authoritarian regime. At the same time, Russia continues to be an important supporter of Serbia in terms of differences with Kosovo, and this is reflected at the international level, even within the UN.

On the other hand, the European Union remains an important aspiration in Serbia's progress, because its benefits are much greater and more significant, being linked to economic prosperity, good governance and raising living standards. Although accession negotiations have been open since 2012, the delay in this process is hampered by both the unfinished negotiation chapters and the distrust of Brussels' leaders in Belgrade's intentions. Serbia still has to show that it really wants to join the EU, and in this respect, it should not tacitly sever relations with Russia or China, but a good example would be the orientation of foreign policy with that of the European Union.

China, more recently seen as a new entrant to the region with considerable economic potential, is seen by Belgrade policymakers as the necessary economic aid in matters related to industry or even economic recovery. Although initially China-Serbia relations were not seen as negative over time, due to the political and ideological rapprochement, which does not fold in some respects with the West, the relationship between the two states began to be perceived with skepticism about developments and the geopolitical interests that China brings to Europe.

Although some of the actions taken by Russia and China in Serbia are economically beneficial, they have an interest in shaping the decisions of the Belgrade government so that they are based on their political desires for domination and control, especially since Serbia is a key player in the region and can further influence.

The COVID-19 crisis has further underlined the way Serbia perceives and enjoys its relations with Russia and China, which has once again drawn the attention of the international community to Serbia's interests and aspirations for the future. The continued oscillation between East and West only undermines the Belgrade government's confidence in European aspirations, while Russia and China are taking advantage of this

instability to strengthen their regional position, especially as Serbia is a good pawn in the political games and geopolitical strategies of the great powers.

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MONTENEGRO'S ACCESSION PROCESS TO THE EU: SUSTAINABILITY BEFORE MOMENTUM

Adela-Alexandra Cosgarea

Introduction

Generally, Montenegro is referred to as a Western Balkan state that is on its slow, but sure way to joining the European Union. This description of the former Yugoslav state is usually not enrichened further and Montenegro remains defined by its geographical position, its economic performance, and its precarious history. This paper aims to uncover and discuss all the layers and the aspects that define the Balkan identity of the Montenegrin state and analyze it with respect to the workings of the European Union. The gathering of historical, political, economic, and social factors will be used in creating a genuine image of the Montenegrin nation and its state of affairs nowadays. In parallel, the complete procedure of the European Union integration process will be discussed and illustrated concretely by Montenegro's gradual steps towards enlargement. The fact that Montenegro is experiencing a longer integration procedure has been a subject of focus on the international stage and its advantages and drawbacks are constantly debated and analyzed. An equally important pillar of this article is to illustrate the development Montenegro has achieved in all the aforementioned sectors, while also discussing what should be expected from this state in the future, as well as the fate of the EU-Montenegro dynamic.

The Path to Independence

Except for the coastline that meets the Adriatic Sea in the south-east, Montenegro is otherwise bordered by Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia, and Croatia, gathering lowlands as well as mountainous land. One of the smallest countries in Europe, Montenegro's population surpasses half a million people, but the steady increase in demographics in the last couple of decades is worth mentioning. Having multiple islands under its jurisdiction, Montenegro disposes of various ports alongside its coastline, making it an accessible state. With a rich culture and preserved natural environments, this state is the host of national treasures such as the

Đurđevića Tara Bridge which spans over the deepest canyon in Europe and the Island of Saint Stefan.[1] In terms of international relations, Montenegro's external policy was to obtain as many benefits as possible. The 18th and 19th centuries were marked by the state's relations with both Russian and the Habsburg Empire, as the Montenegrin leaders were more often than not successful in acquiring financial help from the former. In what concerns its neighbor, Serbia, Montenegro has constructed and maintained a friendly and, simultaneously, competitive relationship. This exact attitude was employed by the smaller state when acting on the global stage.[2] Seldomly remembered and often left behind in the process of development that Europe has gone through in the past century, Montenegro is not a state usually found in today's headlines, but it is beginning to garner a more conspicuous place on the global scale. Therefore, Montenegro's decision to join the European Union has been determined by a multitude of factors, each of their own importance and each worthy of examining.

The beginning of the 20th century marks a growing closeness between Montenegro and Europe as both parties had seen an improvement in their diplomatic capabilities as well as an increased kinship between the royal houses of the continent as King Nikola I of Montenegro had both the King of Italy and the Grand Duke Nicholas of Russia as his sons-in-law.[3] Although the state was plagued by internal power politics, the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) took precedence and solicited Montenegro's undivided attention and power. Tensions remained high even after the conflicts were over, but the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on the 28th of June, 1914 sparked the most complex and destructive war seen until then in what concerns the number of states involved, the casualties, and the damage caused at the end of the aggressions.[4]

As Montenegro sided with Serbia against the Austro-Hungarian forces in 1914, in less than two years, the small Balkan state would see its

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[1] George Makepeace Towle, *Brief history of Montenegro, to which is added a short account of Bulgaria, compiled from Mackenzie and Baker*, Boston, James R. Osgood & Co, 1877, Online: https://archive.org/details/briefhistoryofmo00towluoft/page/30/mode/2up, accessed: 18.02.2021.

[2] Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century*, Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1983, pp. 34-36.

[3] Francis Stevenson, *A history of Montenegro*, Chestnut Hill, Adamant Media, 2005, pp. 211-212.

[4] Kenneth Morrison, *Nationalism, Identity and Statehood in Post-Yugoslav Montenegro*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, pp. 5-8.

central cities encircled by the Austrian army, its royal family fleeing the country to save themselves from a crude fate, and its army being dissolved at the beginning of 1916. Two years later, as the Austrian troops retreated, the Serbian army invaded Montenegro and the Great National Assembly of the Serb People in Montenegro arrayed enough power and resources to go against the wishes of the population and proclaim the union between Serbia and Montenegro. On the 1st of December 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (KSCS) was created and it incorporated the South Slavs at the wishes of the National Council in Zagreb. From his exile in France, King Nikola has tried to instill the fight into the Montenegrin nation, advising it to riot to the extent of their possibilities. However, with an absent king and with Montenegro already regarding as a conquered state, there was little to be done. Montenegro was marginalized from an economic point of view, which determined a stagnation in all of its other sectors. The centralized, self-imposed Serbian government became an issue for the other nations and a reason for increasing aggression and instability in the state's internal affairs. The tense environment inside the KSCS was met with a tumultuous external situation as the rise of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany threatened a stable world order. [5]

Although Yugoslavia initially tried to consolidate its neutral position in the wake of Italy's invasion of Albania and Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia and Poland, it became increasingly difficult to remain non-belligerent, and thus, Yugoslavia signed the Tripartite Pact in 1941. Given the fact that the people perceived Germany as an enemy, this decision wasn't accepted by the population, which revolted and supported the making of a new government as the streets were chanting relentlessly "better war than a pact" ("bolje rat nego pakt"). Nazi Germany intervened dissolving the army and having the royal family retreat once again. Defenseless and hopeless, Yugoslavia was divided between the Axis powers and Montenegro's fate was to be dictated by German and Italian leadership.[6]

In contrast to the international situation that had countries struggling to preserve their independence and identity, Montenegro was also looking to manage instabilities internally. Under the pretext of offering independence to the Montenegrin nation, Italy wanted to convince the

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[5] *Ibidem*, pp. 9-11.

[6] *Ibidem*, pp. 23-28.

smaller state to accept and welcome Italian occupation as it would have allegedly brought many advantages to the Western Balkan state such as sovereignty, development, and stability. The nation was divided yet again, the majority opting to preserve their honor and to resist the promised independence under Italian patronage. The armed resistance of the Montenegrin nation was secretly organized and the attacks against the Italians began in July 1941. The uprisings were quickly quelled, but they brought the beginning of a fractioned nation and a civil war between the Montenegrin Partisans and the Chetniks. While both sides made extensive efforts to destroy one another, they fell short to fully oppose the foreign occupants. Britain found itself to be part of the conflict and to support the Partisans in the battle against Germany and Italy. While the former was organizing offensive operations inside Montenegro, the Chetniks arranged mass-killings of Partisans. The polarized Montenegrins were fighting multiple wars and in 1944, there was still no clear victor. Despite the support of the Allies manifested through the establishment of the Balkan Air Force, the decreasing number of Partisans and their resources rendered them to a state of continuous defense against the Germans. The end of the Second World War brought the hostilities in Montenegro to a close. It is without a doubt that Montenegro had suffered great losses during the war as it had worryingly lower demographics as approximately 100.000 people were killed. Moreover, homes, buildings, industrial sites, and even cities altogether have felt the wrath of the Montenegrin civil war. In the aftermath of devastation and economic regression, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia remained the one intact entity that would have to rebuild their state as well as their society. Thus, in 1945, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was created. It incorporated six republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovenia) with clearly drawn borders between them and two other autonomous regions (Kosovo and Vojvodina).[7]

The post-war period began as a time of reconstruction and development for Montenegro, the state being one of the poorer regions in serious need of funds. However, Montenegro was soon part of interstate quarrels. One such episode involved Belgrade and Moscow in an argument regarding the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's (SFRY) more independent behavior. Given the fact that the Partisans had achieved the

[7] *Ibidem*, pp. 14-22.

liberation of the country mostly on their own, they kept their honor and followed the USSR's policies and ideology, but retained a degree of independence in what concerned their own actions, a decision which would cause friction between the two states. The Communist Party of Yugoslavia's refusal to supply the Soviet Union with raw materials and the increasing independence Tito asserted on the international stage were great inconveniences for Stalin. Tito's continuous demurral to comply with the Soviet Union had the SFRY expelled from the Cominform in 1948, an act that created a split between the vengeful patriots and the shocked Stalin supporters. After the war, Montenegro became the beneficiary of multiple advantages as the state was well represented in the communist political elites of Yugoslavia and received an excessive amount of funding meant for industrialization and overall development. That is why, when Tito's relation with the USSR became problematic, the situation for Montenegro worsened instantly. People were torn between remaining faithful to their state while renouncing to some extent the communist ideology and pleading for an improvement in the relations between Russia and Yugoslavia. This split was visible even amongst friends and families that vehemently chose to stand by their beliefs. Inside the Communist Party of Montenegro, the members had to declare their support for Tito. Doing otherwise would have prison as an immediate consequence. However, siding with Stalin became very common amongst the Montenegrin population which led to many arrests. As the Cominform crisis was more or less settled, Montenegro returned to its path of reconstruction and development between the 1950s and the 1970s.[8]

This period saw a completely rebuild infrastructure, the ratification of a new constitution in 1974, the achievement of the Bar to Belgrade railroad, and vigorous economic productivity based on urbanization, tourism, and industrialization. However, Tito's death left behind a state where its republics were mainly independent and which had no clear successor. As expected, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia experienced economic stagnation and increased political destabilization which slowed Montenegro's progress rate. Nevertheless, the Montenegrin question of identity resurged once more. The nation was essentially polarized between "Crnogorstvo" (explained as traditional Montenegrin

[8] Svetozar Rajak, Konstantina E. Botsiou, Eirini Karamouzi, Evanthis Hatzivassiliou (eds.), *The Balkans in the Cold War*, London, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017, pp. 269-274.

values) and “Srpstvo” (which was the Serb identity). Due to Montenegro being a small and underdeveloped area, the central authority urged the people there to refer to themselves as Serbs, even though they had a different history and unassociated characteristics. The survival of this state was heavily questioned as it seemed that it would become part of Serbia to solve a more complex question of identity and statehood. Even if Montenegro was a separate republic inside Yugoslavia, the Montenegrin nation was not defined or accepted. Soon enough, Montenegro was referred to as a division of Serbia, while the notion of a Montenegrin population was perceived to be the Communist Party of Yugoslavia’s attempt at weakening Serbia. As always, people seemed to have divided opinions – some advocated for Montenegro’s identity, some supported Montenegro as an autonomous republic within Serbia and others considered acknowledging the Serbian roots of the Montenegrin identity a fair concession. Towards the end of the Cold War, discontent in Montenegro grew and it culminated in anger towards the political elite and in protests that would be used by the Serbs to reach their own political objectives. As the anti-Communist revolution swept Eastern European states one by one and democracy took the place of totalitarian regimes, Montenegro was to undergo two major transformations in terms of its political system. During the 1980s, Montenegro was subjected to an economic crisis determined by rising unemployment, inflation, and increasing debt. The socialist economic model proved to be a burden for the financial status of the country. Moreover, Montenegro’s case was not an isolated one inside Yugoslavia, the hardships of a critical economy expanding to the other republics as well. From a political perspective, Montenegro wasn’t more stable. The economic crisis affected the people’s living standards and by the end of the 1980s around 20% of the population lived in poverty. The ethnic divergences between the nations of Yugoslavia were coupled with the increasing nationalist sentiment among all the republics and with the rise to power of Slobodan Milošević in 1987. His leadership would come to have drastic effects on the Montenegrin state of affairs. Between 1988 and 1989, he orchestrated a series of reforms in Serbia and Montenegro to affirm his power and he placed his supporters in important functions inside the Yugoslav Presidency Council on behalf of Montenegro and the two autonomous regions within Serbia. The change in leadership in Montenegro took place almost instantly, but the new younger government was in clear favor of implementing more democratic values

which matched the state of the international geopolitics where Gorbachev's values and objectives were the beginning of a democratic and free Eastern Europe. The first multi-party elections held in all republics returned the ethnic separatists to the top and diminished the influence of the communists a great deal. [9]

Encouraged by the political climate in Europe and by the economic discrepancies of the wealthier republics of Yugoslavia and despite Milošević's outright refusal, the question of the dissolution of Yugoslavia was positively received by all the other republics. During 1991, beginning with Slovenia and Croatia all the republics of Yugoslavia declared their independence. Montenegro was the only state that rejected independence and that chose to be part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. However, not a year later, the relations between Serbia and Montenegro began to deteriorate. Among the most important differences, it is crucial to mention the dynamic between the two nations that was based on equality and fairness, but on the subordination of the Montenegrin state as Milošević started conducting politics on behalf of the smaller state. Being part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had more drawbacks than benefits for Montenegro. With a polarized society on the issue of supporting or rebelling against Serbia, Montenegro's internal support for independence was widespread. [10] In 2002, a restructuring of the relation between Serbia and Montenegro came in the form of the Belgrade Agreement, which changed the name of the federation to Serbia and Montenegro, offered both states increased independence in their internal and external matters and prohibited Montenegro from having an independence referendum earlier than three years.[11]

On the 21st of May 2006, Montenegro held an independence referendum that showed 55.5% of the voters in favor of dissolving the union between the two states and having Montenegro as a sovereign and independent state. Its independence was recognized immediately by Serbia, by the European Union, and by the United Nations. This was the

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[9] Kenneth Morrison, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-48.

[10] Ivan Vukovic, *The post-communist political transition of Montenegro: Democratization prior to Europeanization* in Journal of Contemporary European Studies, No. 1, 2011, pp. 60-65.

[11] *Agreement on Principles of Relations between Serbia and Montenegro within the State Union*, Belgrade, 2002, online: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/sg/69898.pdf, accessed: 20.02.2021, pp. 2-5

pivotal point in Montenegro's development as a state and as a society, which would dictate the pace of change the state would conduct and the objectives that it will try to reach in the following years. Given the background of the EU-Montenegro relation, it was only expected for the Western Balkan state to officially express its will to join the European Union and NATO as a unitary and independent state. [12]

The Dynamic between Montenegro and the European Union

It would be perfunctory to assume that Montenegro becoming an independent state represented the origin of its relationship with the European Union. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia signed as early as 1967 an agreement with the EEC, beginning a dynamic that would be determined by the general political climate and by the interests of both parties. Even then, Yugoslavia had a preferential status and developed a stable relation based on cooperation. What is important to emphasize is the financial support that the EEC would provide for the State Union and, implicitly, for Montenegro, which proved to be a significant aid for the development of the smallest Western Balkan state. Nevertheless, the most visible shift in the relation between Montenegro and the EU was the 1997 presidential elections that brought pro-European and progressive governing, which was bound to offer similarities in standpoints and objectives between the two and to encourage substantial financial assistance.[13]

After the fall of the Milošević's government in 2000, the EU's relationship with both the Serbian and Montenegrin states improved drastically, as becoming part of the European Union became a priority on the State Union's foreign policy agenda. The European Council from Santa Maria da Feira stated in the same year that the Western Balkan states are potential candidates for the European Union membership, an opinion which was underlined anew during the Thessaloniki European Council three years later when the policy framework for managing the states' integration was created. EU's active participation in matters concerning the FRY was proved once more when the Belgrade Agreement was negotiated.

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[12] Ian Traynor, *Montenegro vote finally seals death of Yugoslavia*, 2006, Online: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/may/22/balkans, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[13] Dragan Djuric, *Montenegro's aspects for European integration: on a twin track* in *South-East Europe Review*, No. 4, 2004, Online: (PDF) Montenegro's prospects for European integration: on a twin track (researchgate.net), accessed: 20.02.2021, pp. 82-83.

Being an omniscient presence and pressuring both Serbia and Montenegro into accepting an agreement neither thought entirely fit anymore were EU's achievements. The Union was aware of the situation that each state found itself in, while the assessments concerning the level of progress each country had to make to be eligible to enter the EU were continuous and detail-oriented. In the years leading up to Montenegro's 2006 referendum, the disparities between Serbia and Montenegro became even clearer and their economically unstable climates gave way to political issues. Even the differences between the sizes of the economies and between the Serbian dinar and the Euro were enough to determine an unfeasible harmonization of the two countries. The EU quickly understood that both countries joining as a single state was a nearly impossible objective to achieve due to unassailable deterrents in the procedure of harmonization between Serbia and Montenegro. Therefore, in 2004, the twin-track mechanism was introduced and defined as a part of the Stabilisation and Association Process and it separated the political from the economic issues in an effort to assist the progress of both states.[14]

The political and economic discrepancies determined a stagnant dialogue between the State Union and the EU, thus it was the latter's responsibility to be the driving force in the integration process. Montenegro, however, had proved itself a worthy and collaborative counterpart, while the EU has never stopped showing its support for the eventual integration of the state. Significantly lagging behind all the other Western Balkan states, the Montenegrin government established in 2002 created the basic infrastructural foundation that would facilitate the process of EU accession. Among the most important measures, there are the founding of the Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations and European Integration and the establishment of a Committee for European Integration. Alongside creating a functioning framework, Montenegro has also engaged in implementing notable reforms concerning economic performance, corruption, state administration, and the judicial system. Sequentially, the European Union itself was showing an equally great interest in providing the Balkan states with an optimal environment for development and integration. [15]

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[14] Dragan Djuric, *op. cit.*, pp. 84.
[15] *Ibidem*, pp. 100-101.

Once Montenegro had declared its independence and it had been recognized on the international stage, the accession process to the European Union truly began. In 2007 Montenegro signed the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (which was to enter into force in 2010) as part of the special integration process designed by the EU specifically for the Western Balkan states. This act provided a tailored framework concerning the Montenegro-EU relations. Its main provisions ensured the EU's support for the Balkan state in what concerned strengthening democratic practices and the rule of law, reinforcing the political, economic and social stability, developing the state's foreign policy and regional cooperation, and creating a functioning market economy. The European Partnership with Montenegro was yet another tool aimed at providing every available resource to facilitate the correct implementation of EU values, principles, and laws by the Montenegrin authorities. [16]

On the other hand, Montenegro was making exceptional efforts to prove itself worthy of being accepted into the Union by cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, implementing all the EU regional initiatives, maintaining agreeable bilateral relation with its neighbors, adopting favorable economic reforms and enforcing without fail the obligations of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. Thus, Montenegro officially submitted its application for European Union membership in December 2008. Even before becoming an official candidate to the EU, Montenegro's hard efforts were repaid by having the EU grant the state visa liberalization (free travel to the Schengen area) and by being part from 2007-2013 in three financially supporting programs, which asserted further the openness with which Montenegro's situation was handled by the Union. As Montenegro had shown its capability of making significant changes from a political and economic perspective and also of implementing the acquis of the EU, the state was granted candidate country status in 2010. The formal membership negotiations commenced in 2012 after the Commission had issued a positive opinion on the part of Montenegro, deeming its level of compliance with Copenhagen criteria to be satisfactory. This proved to be

[16] Solveig Richter, *Two at one blow? The EU and its quest for security and democracy by political conditionality in the Western Balkans in Democratization*, No. 3, Volume 19, Berlin, Germany, 2012, pp. 508-510.

only the beginning of a complex reorganization and development process Montenegro was to undergo.[17]

The driving force behind EU Integration

Like every other Eastern European state that has made arrangements to join the European Union, a paramount factor in taking such an important decision is what the EU has to offer. In the aftermath of a resource-draining and extremely tensed Cold War, the Eastern Bloc acquired independence and installed democracy only to have their foreign policy objectives completed when they joined the EU. Montenegro has followed more or less the same path. What is remarkable in the smaller Balkan state's situation is the extensive progress that was made in a limited timeframe and the fortunate cooperation which was the product of both EU and Montenegro's clear-cut intentions. The state's motives for joining the EU surely fall into the preconceived categories germane to economic and political stability, increased security, heightened support on the international stage, and development programs in numerous sectors such as culture, education, health, transportation, and environment. Montenegro's unsteady infrastructure was in great need of development opportunities and the European Union's detail-oriented preparations for approving the candidate status were bound to bring plenty of reforms and significant financial aid which would drastically change Montenegro's state of affairs even before becoming an independent state. Shadowed constantly by Serbia's protruding stance throughout history, Montenegro was not an extremely visible state on the international arena, having suffered great losses during the wars and having to endure constant internal ethnic clashes. The events of the previous century had drained the larger and more prepared state actors, which explained why Montenegro, as part of another state had even fewer chances of maintaining a stable economic and political environment. [18]

At the moment, Montenegro and Kosovo are the two states that use the Euro currency outside the Eurozone and without having any agreement with the European Central Bank that would officially allow them to do so.

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[17] *Ibidem*, pp. 512-516.

[18] Beáta Huszka, *The power of perspective: Why EU membership still matters in the Western Balkans*, 2020, Online: https://ecfr.eu/publication/the_power_of_perspective_why_eu_membership_still_matters_in_western_balkans/, accessed: 20.02.2021.

Even though the European Union had subtly expressed its dissatisfaction with Montenegro's adoption of the Euro prior to becoming an EU member and meeting the convergence criteria, it has been more or less accepted as a decision made in dire and urgent circumstances. Adopting the Euro from the beginning has been Montenegro's method of salvaging a destroyed economy, but this decision has brought meaningful disadvantages for the state as well as another reason for joining the EU. While this currency was created by the European Union in order to stabilize prices, aid financial markets, improve the stability of the EU member states and provide the EU with an assertive presence in the global economy, a state is meant to undergo numerous procedures to prepare itself for such a change in their respective economy. That is the exact reason why there are still states in the Union that do not use the Euro. To date, Montenegro's use of the Euro can only be supported by maintaining a continuous currency flow inside the country which is largely achieved through tourism and exports. Additionally, Montenegro cannot express its concerns or opinions when it comes to the Euro monetary policy, nor can it be aided by the European Central Bank in case of an economic collapse. This has been a debated problem in the process of Montenegrin accession to the Union. It had reached a point where the idea of Montenegro renouncing the Euro only to reinstate once it became an EU member was put forward.[19] Currently, the implications of this aspect on the dynamic between Montenegro and the European Union are still a debated subjected as it confers the latter both an upper hand in the situation that negotiations become contentious and another obstacle in the harmonization of Montenegro's economic and political aspects with those of the current EU member states.

Contradictory attitudes

On its part, the European Union has been nothing but supportive, agreeable, and welcoming when accommodating the prolonged process of Montenegrin integration. However, the opinions are shared among the EU member states. Until now, the most vocal state in their opposition towards a new enlargement wave has been France, which holds a traditionalist circular view of how the Union should function. Macron has been harshly

[19] Ana Bogavac, *Montenegro's peculiar path to the EU membership*, 2013, online: https://www.dw.com/en/montenegros-peculiar-path-to-eu-membership/a-16583842 , accessed: 20.02.2021.

criticized for vetoing the opening for negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, but his attitude concerns the entire Western Balkan bloc, while his perspective is shared by the majority of the French population. Polarized between a superiority complex represented by France's desire to have a European Union that functions with Germany and France at its center and a crude indifference to the Balkan integration as it does not produce any effects among the citizens, the French propose focusing on deepening the EU, instead of widening it.[20] Furthermore, political analysts have tried to understand the reason for Montenegro's extreme willingness to align itself with NATO and EU policies and while some regard it as desperation to reach an economically stable state with the help of the Union, others believe there is a hidden agenda that the government of Montenegro keeps hidden behind the "zero-problems doctrine". Montenegro's foreign minister, Djordje Radulovic, has affirmed multiple times that the state has no interest in pursuing old feuds with its neighbors or beginning new ones, as it is focused on gradually pursuing its most important goals.[21]

This readiness to avert any emerging problems in terms of foreign relations has determined a taut and rigid relation between Montenegro and Russia. The former's states international objective of joining both NATO and the EU has not been received positively by Russia. In 2017, a poll conducted on the Montenegrin people has shown less than half of the respondents willing to join the North Atlantic Treaty. However, Montenegro went further with its preparations and finally became the 29th member of the organization. Russia's disagreement was clear even before the preparatory formalities took place. A coup d'état organized in Podgorica in 2016 was confirmed to have had Russian and Serbian involvement. After joining NATO, the Russian government was unequivocal in their statement that there would be "retaliatory measures on a reciprocal basis". Montenegro's continuous pro-Western inclination sparks a passive relationship between the two countries. Amidst all the recent discussions and sanctions imposed by both states against one

[20] Mathieu Pollet, *Majority of French still against Balkans' EU integration*, 2021, online: https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/majority-of-french-still-against-balkans-eu-integration/, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[21] Orlando Crowcroft, *Montenegro wants to join the EU – but will Brussels have it?*, 2021, online: https://www.euronews.com/2021/02/01/montenegro-wants-to-join-the-eu-but-will-brussels-have-it, accessed: 20.02.2021 .

another, Montenegro seems to adopt a stance of consideration, claiming that such consequences are part of the accession process to the EU, from which the smaller state does not want to divert.[22]

However, the European Union remains strong in its supportive stance towards Montenegro. Beginning with the 1990s, the Western Balkans have represented a source of interest for the EU, which has become a consistent aid to the states in that region. By keeping the promise of prospective EU integration, the Union has been able to urge the states to improve their political and security system. Strategically approaching the EU's action, there is certainly a pattern in what concerns its dynamics with the Western Balkans. As the smaller states do everything in their power to progress and implement reforms, the EU is using a reward mechanism that comprises benefits concerning the fulfillment of the Copenhagen criteria and that is attributed whenever a state has proved its efficiency in enforcing extremely important adjustments or when the changes start to become visible. Montenegro is the most illustrative example of the EU's reward-oriented system.[23] There are still issues to be resolved, but Montenegro has proved itself to be committed to EU integration. Its efforts are clear as the Commission has introduced a new methodology that gives the member states a more relevant and active role in the negotiation process, hoping to also cater to the aforementioned French opinion regarding the Western Balkans. Even though Serbia and Montenegro are not affected by the new regulations, it is with great hope that the Union seeks to improve the perspective some member states have on their accession process. Sure enough, Montenegro has been opened to the respective changes. Moreover, as opposed to Serbia, Montenegro's population of 600.000 people does not affect the dynamics of EU member states, the lack of ethnic clashes and the support of the Montenegrin nation constitute more reasons why Montenegro should be the first Western Balkan state to join the Union. The EU representatives are also hoping that the successful integration of the smaller state would offer an example to the other countries that accession to the EU is not only an advantageous foreign policy purpose but also an achievable and beneficial ambition.[24]

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[22] Samir Kajosevic, *New Montenegrin Govt Maintains Russia Sanctions, Deferring to EU*, 2020, Online: https://balkaninsight.com/2020/12/14/new-montenegrin-govt-maintains-russia-sanctions-deferring-to-eu/, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[23] Solveig Richter, *op. cit.*, pp. 514.

[24] Orlando Crowcroft, *op. cit.*

Limited progress

In what concerns the current state of negotiations between Montenegro and the European Union, the last of the 33 chapters - Chapter 8 regarding competition policy - has been officially opened in June 2020, while only three chapters have been provisionally closed (Science and research, Education and culture and External relations) so far. The yearly reports from the European Commission assess a gradual development in multiple respects, but it has been always stated that there is still progress to be made on the part of Montenegro.[25]

To date, the most recent Commission report describes Montenegro's achieved level of development as intermediary. The fight against corruption and organized crime, the fundamental rights, the implementation of the EU acquis, public administration, and the economic environment are all domains in which Montenegro "has some level of preparedness"[26], while governance and other political criteria remain unstable. Among all of the aspects, the key problems, where Montenegro is simply stagnant, are the freedom of expression, the judiciary, high levels of corruption, and organized crime.[27]

In August 2020, Montenegro organized parliamentary elections after the pandemic has caused the previous parliament to be absent in the early months of 2020. According to the Commission, the country managed to hold transparent and competitive elections, where each party campaigned fairly and had the opportunity to make its agenda known. Even so, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe has warned that the media coverage was limited and that the governing party had an unjust advantage because of that.[28] For the first time in 30 years, the Democratic Party of Socialists in Montenegro (DPS) was surpassed by the opposition parties and did not manage to obtain a percentage high enough to secure the most seats in Parliament. Even if the immediate consequence

[25] Council of the EU, *Fifth meeting of the Accession Conference with Montenegro at Deputy level*, 2020, Online: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/06/30/fifth-meeting-of-the-accession-conference-with-montenegro-at-deputy-level-brussels-30-june-2020/, accessed: 20.02.2021 .

[26] European Commission, *Montenegro 2020 Report*, online: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/montenegro_report_2020.pdf, accessed: 20.02.2021, p. 9.

[27] European Commission, *op. cit.*

[28] *Ibidem*, pp. 10-12.

is expected to be a clash in the Western Balkan state's foreign policy between the new Parliament configuration and the current president, Milo Đukanović, this change seems to give the European Union hope for more active and efficient governance. Montenegro is, therefore, firmly encouraged to increase the level of frankness and effectiveness with which the political dialogue is conducted inside the country. The elections have also shed light on societal problems Montenegro is experiencing such as having a polarized population on religious and ethnicity issues. [29]

The judiciary system represents another problematic element as it makes steady progress, but has not yet achieved its main goal – eliminating political interference. As the Commission underlines that the recommendations made in previous years were only partially addressed, it also focuses on the modest development this sector has undergone. The independence of the judiciary was once again questioned by the Union after the Judicial Court decided to appoint for a third term seven court presidents including Vesna Medenica, the president of the Supreme Court of Montenegro. Despite the necessary legal framework that guarantees judicial objectivity being established, reports that accuse members of the judicial system of receiving benefits from the government in exchange for favorable rulings prevent Montenegro from achieving the European Union's desired level of fairness and impartiality. An ethical code designed to guide the judges and prosecutors is in place but has restrained effectiveness as, despite several disciplinary punishments having been introduced, there were enough cases of violations of the code of ethics for this to remain a worrying issue. At the same time, the Commission is suggesting a revision of the code of ethics as well as improving the mechanisms for detecting judicial unfairness. [30]

As stated in Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union, one of the most important EU values, found also in Montenegro's development plan is the "respect for human rights". Just as in most areas, noticeable progress has been made, but unfortunately, it is not enough to consider this chapter closed. In 2020, Montenegro became the first East-European country that has recognized same-sex couples and that has allowed them the same rights as heterosexual ones except for child adoption. This step

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[29] Jovana Marovic, *Winners and Losers in Montenegro's Earthquake Election*, 2020, Online: https://balkaninsight.com/2020/09/02/winners-and-losers-in-montenegros-earthquake-election/, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[30] European Commission, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-25.

has sparked only positive responses at the international level, proving to be an unprejudiced state, committed to change.[31] The EU mentions trust in the Ombudsman and enforcements of minority rights as achievements that tend to be overshadowed by recent religious and ethnic-motivated attacks and by continuous violence against women and children.[32]

Freedom of expression has been regarded as one of the areas where progress is not effective, nor visible. The media law is updated yearly, but the arrests of editors for their online publications put a stop to any breakthrough in this sector. Only in 2020, a worryingly high number of journalists has been charged with criminal offenses, which gave way to protests at a multinational level against unfair detainment and prosecution. The media issue spreads also to RTCG's independence and impartiality as it is the main state-owned public broadcasting organization in Montenegro. Aside from its independence, RTCG's professionalism is also deemed inadequate, spreading misinformation among the population.[33]

The fight against corruption and organized crime continues to occupy a place of chief importance in the overall development process Montenegro is experiencing. In the case of corruption management, the progress made is centered on the Anti-Corruption Agency and its mechanisms for investigation, limitation, and control of corruption cases in Montenegro. In contrast, the criminal justice system is deficient and easy to elude, but the rising number of investigations, arrests, and convictions is enough proof to affirm that an improvement of the internal organization of law enforcement has occurred. Moreover, fighting against crime groups on the Montenegrin territory was possible due to the cooperation of the domestic authorities with the international police. Among the most important areas in which Montenegro has managed a noticeable strengthening of its mechanisms and general methods of action, there are human and weapon trafficking, money laundering, and cybercrime. [34]

Given the illustrative examples discussed, it is only safe to affirm that Montenegro finds itself struggling to surpass the intermediate level of

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[31] Nikola Đorđević, *Montenegro recognises same-sex partnerships, but emerging Europe still has a long way to go*, 2020, Online: https://emerging-europe.com/news/montenegro-recognises-same-sex-partnerships-but-emerging-europe-still-has-a-long-way-to-go/, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[32] European Commission, *op. cit.*, pp. 6.

[33] *Ibidem*, pp. 30-32.

[34] *Ibidem*, pp. 34-37.

this transitional process. As demonstrated by the small number of chapters provisionally closed after eight years of negotiations, Montenegro is progressing gradually in each sector, but not many of them can be defined as completely secure, developed, and updated. Analyzing the progress made in a wider timeframe, the improvement Montenegro has achieved internally and internationally is testimony to their dedication not only to become a member of the EU but to permanently improve the lives of the people and the workings of a small and disregarded state.

Conclusions

Whenever the representatives of the European Union speak about the Western Balkan states' integration, the leitmotif "the future lies within the EU" is omnipresent. This expression is a great show of diplomacy on the Union's part as it channels enough ambiguity, but also an adequate amount of hope and conviction, which justify the extended period used to ensure an accurate execution of all the criteria necessary to become a member of the European Union. However, international discussions and debates have revealed promises made by the EU that Montenegro, alongside Serbia, would be able to join the Union by 2020. After the aforementioned year has passed, the EU is offering 2025 as the ultimate deadline for the finalization of Montenegro's integration process. Nevertheless, many remained skeptical seeing the current state of affairs. Debated time and again, Montenegro's specific delay in the negotiation process sparks questions regarding the state's ability to fulfill all the requirements for integration. The European Union has been caught, on its part, managing different opinions and providing the utmost support for the Western Block, while being its harshest critic when managing the development reforms. In the context of securing a smooth addition to the Union, the European Union remains cautious of creating imbalances and widening the already-existing economic gaps between the current member states. The EU is committed to ensuring Montenegro's capability to sustain itself no matter how long or tedious the process could become. It is ultimately a manner of perspective, but the most optimistic standpoint accounts for such a prolonged period allocated for negotiations through its outcome – a functioning and stable Montenegro successfully integrated in the European Union.

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Part II:

The Western Balkans: Historical Developments and Political Analyses

DALL'OTTOCENTO AL NOVECENTO: I BALCANI IN UN MANUALE DI STORIA

Giulia Lami

Il mio contributo illustra le modalità con cui ho affrontato la storia dei Balcani e in particolare dei Balcani occidentali e cioè Albania, Bosnia ed Erzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia nello scrivere il manuale *Storia dell'Europa orientale da Napoleone alla fine della Prima guerra mondiale*, cercando di contemperare esigenze didattiche e approfondimento storiografico.

L'idea di scrivere un manuale di storia dell'Europa orientale nasceva dall'esigenza di fornire uno strumento utile non solo agli studenti dei miei corsi, ma anche a quanti in questi anni si sono chiesti che cosa sia quest'area[1], perché abbia questa denominazione e in che cosa il suo studio si differenzi da quello più generale della storia europea. Spiegavo nella premessa che si tratta di una denominazione propria del mondo universitario italiano, precisando che, spesso, fino al 1989, si usava sussumere questa parte d'Europa sotto il nome di Paesi dell'Est o Paesi socialisti, esplicitando la divisione fra Ovest ed Est creatasi nel 1945 e aggravatasi con la guerra fredda dagli anni Cinquanta agli anni Novanta del XX secolo, dettata da un criterio ristretto, fortemente contemporaneistico e molto politicizzato. Questa divisione fra Ovest ed Est veniva infatti proiettata indietro nei secoli, annullando la rete fitta di rapporti e relazioni che sono sempre esistiti fra l'Occidente e l'Oriente del nostro continente e che meritano di essere studiati nel dettaglio per l'importanza che hanno avuto, soprattutto oggi nel quadro di una Europa più integrata nelle sue varie componenti.

Con «Europa orientale» intendo quindi nel mio studio designare

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[1] Fra i colleghi italiani che hanno affrontato questo tema ricordo: Angelo Tamborra, *L'Europa centro-orientale nei secoli XIX-XX (1800-1920)*, Vallardi: Milano, 1971; Domenico Caccamo, *Introduzione alla storia dell'Europa orientale*, Roma: Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1991; Bianca Valota, *Storia dell'Europa orientale*, Milano: Jaca book, 1993; Andrea Graziosi, *Dai Balcani agli Urali. L'Europa orientale nella storia contemporanea*, Roma: Donzelli, 1999; Francesco Guida, *La Russia e l'Europa centro-orientale: 1815-1914*, Roma: Carocci, 2003; Armando Pitassio, *Corso introduttivo allo studio della storia dell'Europa orientale dall'antichità a Versailles*, Perugia: Morlacchi, 2007; Stefano Bianchini, *Le sfide della modernità: idee, politiche e percorsi dell'Europa orientale nel XIX e XX secolo*, Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2009.

un'ampia area del continente europeo, che comprende una parte prettamente orientale con la Russia, la Bielorussia, l'Ucraina; una parte centrale con Paesi baltici, Polonia, Slovacchia, Cechia, Ungheria; una parte sud-orientale con Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Grecia, Cipro e Turchia europea e una parte jugoslava (slavo-meridionale) con Slovenia, Croazia, Bosnia-Erzegovina, Macedonia, Serbia e Montenegro.

E anche questa divisione potrebbe dar luogo a obiezioni in quanto il criterio storico-politico, quello geografico e quello linguistico si intrecciano in più punti, anche perché queste realtà sono state a lungo parte di imperi estendentisi fra Occidente e Oriente come quello asburgico e quello tedesco (in senso proprio dopo il 1871) e nel caso russo e ottomano a cavallo di più continenti.

Il mio lavoro si è concentrato su un periodo preciso della storia moderno-contemporanea dell'Europa orientale nelle sue articolazioni di cui sopra (orientale, centro-orientale, sud-orientale, slavo-meridionale) e cioè quello racchiuso fra il periodo napoleonico e la prima guerra mondiale.

Come collocare i Balcani in questo spazio? Come definirli per la comprensione degli studenti?

Può sembrare curioso, ma è difficile rinvenire nella storiografia una definizione precisa: i Balcani vengono spesso citati come un dato acquisito quando si parla di «questione d'Oriente», alludendo al fatto che essi furono il terreno principale del confronto tra l'Europa e l'Impero ottomano tra XIX e XX secolo.

Balkan significa in turco montagna – scrivevo – ed ha finito «per indicare sinteticamente la regione sudorientale del nostro continente, la penisola balcanica appunto, caratterizzata anche dalla presenza dei monti «Balcani», un sistema montuoso collocato nella parte centrale della penisola fra Bulgaria e Serbia. Non è questa l'unica catena montuosa della regione – precisavo – ma la denomina. La penisola in sé è circondata dal mar Adriatico a ovest, dallo Ionio a sud-ovest, da mar Egeo, mar di Marmara, mar Nero a est, e segue a nord una linea di confine segnata dai fiumi Danubio, Sava e Kupa»[2].

Nella penisola balcanica collochiamo oggi Bulgaria, Croazia, Serbia, Bosnia ed Erzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Grecia e Turchia europea; dal punto di vista storico, anche se non strettamente

[2] Giulia Lami, *Storia dell'Europa orientale da Napoleone alla fine della Prima guerra mondiale,* Firenze: Mondadori Education-Le Monnier Università, 2019, p. 43.

geografico, possono essere incluse nell'area balcanica anche le terre romene e la Slovenia.

E qui iniziano le complicazioni, perché le suddivisioni politiche dell'Ottocento dislocano questi paesi in contesti sovranazionali diversi. All'inizio del XIX secolo la Croazia e la Slovenia, ma anche la Transilvania, erano inserite nell'Impero asburgico, mentre le altre nazioni, attuali o potenziali, erano parte dell'Impero ottomano, per il quale la regione balcanica, percepita dagli Europei come «periferia», aveva invece un'importanza fondamentale. È questo il motivo per cui molti passaggi della storia romena fra Ottocento e Novecento vengono esaminati in connessione con lo scenario balcanico, in particolare per ciò che concerne i rapporti con l'Impero ottomano.

Come ricorda il mio collega Giorgio Del Zanna, la regione balcanica, nel XIX secolo, «si trovò a ricoprire una posizione baricentrica tra Europa, mondo russo, Nord Africa e Medio Oriente in una stagione nella quale si stava facendo sempre più serrata la competizione globale, economica e quindi politica, tra le grandi potenze»[3]. L'Impero ottomano, come «spazio intermedio» fra Europa e Asia, finiva allora per essere al centro di un gioco complesso a livello europeo e, per estensione, mondiale.

Questa riflessione induce a inserire le cosiddette «lotte di liberazione nazionale» nei Balcani in una prospettiva più ampia: senz'altro le spinte nazionali delle nazioni balcaniche *in fieri* nel corso dell'Ottocento rispondono al più generale movimento d'affermazione del principio nazionale rispetto a quello imperiale, ma non si esauriscono in esso, perché tramite l'appoggio dato alle aspirazioni nazionali dei popoli balcanici le potenze europee poterono ingerirsi nelle questioni ottomane in base ai propri interessi economici e politici che esorbitavano dalla sfera balcanica.

In questa prospettiva, la «questione d'Oriente» è effettivamente «un groviglio di questioni diplomatiche, interessi economici, ambizioni geopolitiche, problemi politico-religiosi, tenuti insieme dal fatto di insistere su quel particolare plesso di territorio costituito dall'impero ottomano»[4].

Questione d'Oriente e lotte di liberazione nazionale diventano quindi nel manuale le grandi rubriche sotto cui tratto dei problemi dei paesi balcanici, inserendoli nel quadro generale della storia d'Europa.

In ogni capitolo del libro, che ne conta diciassette, vi è uno spazio

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[3] Giorgio Del Zanna, *La fine dell'impero ottomano*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2012, p. 13.
[4] Ivi, p. 19.

per le vicende balcaniche, salvo che nei capitoli più specificamente dedicati alla Russia dalle riforme di Alessandro II alla Rivoluzione (cap. 8; 12; 15) o alla Germania e all'Austria-Ungheria a cavallo fra XIX e XX secolo (cap. 11). Dagli esiti del Congresso di Vienna (cap. 2) alla cosiddetta Primavera dei popoli (cap. 3); dalla guerra di Crimea (cap. 4) all'unificazione tedesca (cap. 5) vengono trattati i temi del fermento nei Balcani, dell'affermazione del principato serbo, dell'indipendenza della Grecia, delle dinamiche dell'area danubiano-balcanica fra il 1848 ed il 1856, della nascita dell'Austria-Ungheria nei suoi riflessi sulle aspettative degli slavi dell'Impero.

In una ampia panoramica che va dai Balcani alla Russia analizzo poi il rapporto fra nazione ed impero, soffermandomi sui principali sviluppi (cap. 6). Tratto qui dell'unificazione dei Principati danubiani di Valacchia e Moldavia e della nascita della Romania; della Serbia e del Montenegro; della Grecia alla ricerca del completamento dell'unità per giungere alla nuova crisi d'Oriente, conclusasi con il Congresso di Berlino (cap. 7), illustrando le questioni irrisolte che identifico in quella di Macedonia, Creta, Albania, nel quadro dell'evoluzione dell'Impero ottomano dal congresso di Berlino fino alla rivoluzione dei Giovani Turchi (cap. 9).

Indubbiamente lo spazio maggiore ai Balcani viene riservato laddove tratto del periodo che va dall'annessione della Bosnia-Erzegovina alle guerre balcaniche (cap. 13), in cui mi soffermo sul problema dei piccoli Stati nazionali fra consolidamento interno e influenze esterne, fornendo i lineamenti generali della questione agraria nel contesto balcanico, ritenendola fondamentale per capire i problemi e le scelte di politica economica. Tratto quindi il caso romeno, il caso bulgaro, il caso serbo e montenegrino, il caso greco; riservo attenzione alla guerra italo-ottomana del 1911, che in genere non viene connessa alla questione d'Oriente nelle sue evoluzioni prebelliche. Mi soffermo allora sulla formazione della lega antiottomana, sulla prima e la seconda guerra balcanica, sull'emergere dell'Albania come paese specifico in cerca di un riconoscimento internazionale, sulla pace di Bucarest del 1913, in cui, per la prima volta, sotto l'egida della Romania, furono gli Stati balcanici, e non più le «Grandi Potenze», a essere protagonisti. Dei Balcani tratto quindi nei capitoli finali sulla prima guerra mondiale e sulla nascita dell'Europa post-bellica (capp. 14 e 16), giungendo fino al 1925 per illustrare l'assetto della cosiddetta «Nuova Europa» del periodo interbellico.

In questa breve panoramica ho voluto dar conto degli eventi e delle

questioni specifiche che ho esaminato, seguendo un ordine cronologico, che corrisponde a quello dei principali manuali di storia contemporanea, perché gli studenti potessero facilmente passare dalla dimensione particolare a quella generale, di cui hanno maggior conoscenza, se teniamo presente quale sia la struttura dei libri di testo di storia adottati nelle scuole e nelle università italiane. E tuttavia, come hanno fatto altri colleghi in recenti lavori[5], ho cercato di superare la dimensione cosiddetta manualistica, ponendo alla fine di ogni capitolo un ampio paragrafo di «Riflessioni e approfondimenti», dove, anche alla luce della storiografia, da quella «classica» a quella più recente, pongo una serie di questioni, di interrogativi suscettibili di ulteriori studi.

Il problema di tenere insieme una prospettiva didattica ed una storiografica, non potendo abbandonare il formato manualistico per quello monografico, impone scelte precise, in quanto molte e diverse sarebbero le questioni da esaminare più in dettaglio o con maggiore profondità.

In genere, ho accompagnato la scrittura con riferimenti bibliografici fra parentesi entro il testo, che si ritrovano in una bibliografia essenziale posta alla fine di ogni capitolo. Essenziale, questa bibliografia, proprio perché è noto che i lunghi elenchi di testi a corredo dei capitoli non attirano l'attenzione degli studenti, che scorrendoli non sempre ne capiscono la *ratio* o non ne colgono la pertinenza in relazione ad uno specifico tema, che magari non si evince immediatamente dal titolo dell'opera.

Ho così rinunciato, per forza di cose, ad un apparato di note, che avrebbe senz'altro arricchito il lavoro, ma ne avrebbe alterato la fisionomia, che è appunto, nell'intenzione, quella di un manuale e cioè di un compendio storico e bibliografico di agile lettura e facile consultazione, grazie anche alla testatine che scorrono accanto al testo evidenziando gli argomenti o alle «cartine» – non me ne vogliano i geografi! – che evidenziano i complessi cambiamenti territoriali che hanno luogo in Europa fra le guerre napoleoniche e il conflitto mondiale, specie per ciò che riguarda regioni contese, i cui confini sono spesso rettificati, in via provvisoria o definitiva.

Non è stato tuttavia possibile rinunciare all'opportunità di affrontare sinteticamente, ma nel loro complesso, alcune grandi questioni che trascendono l'arco temporale o lo spazio geografico occupato dal

[5] Lucio Caracciolo, Adriano Roccucci, *Storia contemporanea: dal mondo europeo al mondo senza centro*, Firenze: Le Monnier università-Mondadori education, 2017; Alfredo Canavero, *Storia contemporanea*, Milano; Torino: Pearson, 2019.

manuale.

La principale è quella delle minoranze diasporiche, con cui ci si incontra dappertutto, ma che raramente vengono prese in considerazione in un'ottica comparativa, nel momento in cui queste subiscono congiuntamente, ma con esiti diversi, le stesse politiche di esclusione, discriminazione, assimilazione, integrazione perfino, ma anche persecuzione e sterminio.

È il caso degli ebrei, degli armeni, dei rom/sinti, presenti in ognuno dei contesti geografico-politici considerati nel manuale, e quindi anche nei Balcani, con percorsi secolari di insediamento e spostamento, alla ricerca di una collocazione.

Questi popoli senza più una patria, esistente o potenziale, di riferimento – a differenza delle minoranze transnazionali – hanno un destino in fondo comune: «la loro possibilità di impiantare una comunità stabile, garantendosi, se possibile, il mantenimento della propria identità, dipende dal buon volere d'altri, che ne dettano le condizioni, a seconda del proprio interesse e all'interno della propria visione del mondo»[6].

E amaramente, alla fine del denso capitolo dedicato alle minoranze diasporiche (cap. 10), constatavo come, in una Europa orientale descritta nel corso del manuale sotto il profilo della multiculturalità, multireligiosità, evidenziandone i processi di elaborazione e di sintesi di elementi diversi nel corso del XIX secolo, proprio queste minoranze, che tanto avevano contribuito alla costruzione della fisionomia europea, abbiano poi subito, nel secolo successivo, in tempi e modi diversi, un genocidio, che con loro ha spazzato via il «mondo di ieri», così rimpianto da Stefan Zweig, uno dei suoi migliori e più disillusi cantori.

Come ho accennato, pur privilegiando un impianto didattico di immediata utilità per lo studio, ho cercato, nel paragrafo conclusivo di ogni capitolo, ma anche ove opportuno nel testo, di rendere il senso della complessità di eventi che hanno conseguenze di vasto raggio e lunga portata. Uno di questi è senz'altro il **Congresso di Berlino**, a partire dai suoi antefatti, e cioè la rivolta in Bosnia ed Erzegovina del 1875, la rivolta bulgara del 1876, la Conferenza di Costantinopoli e poi la guerra russo-turca del 1877-78 conclusasi con la provvisoria pace di San Stefano.

Il congresso di Berlino del 1878 viene presentato nel manuale come il simbolo della inesausta diplomazia del «concerto europeo», fondata sul

[6] Giulia Lami, *Storia dell'Europa orientale*, cit., cap. 10, p. 202.

presupposto che «questo fosse il migliore strumento di pace, anche se era scarsamente in grado, per la sua essenza conservatrice, di accogliere veramente le istanze dei nuovi Stati che affrontavano le proprie guerre di liberazione, di cui si blandiva il sentimento nazionale quando poteva servire a respingere gli ottomani, salvo contenerlo o combatterlo quando rischiava di minare le sfere d'influenza delle grandi potenze»[7].

Contro questo giudizio, si potrebbe argomentare che il vero ostacolo a soluzioni diverse era l'esistenza dell'Impero ottomano, ma non si può ignorare che questo era parte costituente delle potenze dell'epoca e non poteva essere cancellato, attraverso una spartizione, che non è detto sarebbe andata a favore degli Stati-nazione balcanici. Per ciò che concerne questi ultimi, va peraltro sottolineato che molto spesso il raggiungimento dell'obiettivo nazionale impedì a questi Stati di colmare il ritardo che avevano accumulato in vari campi, causa la situazione di «minorità» in cui erano stati a lungo tenuti.

La nuova situazione in cui vennero a trovarsi dopo il 1878 rinfocolò i sogni irredentistici motivati dalla presenza di potenziali connazionali al di fuori dei loro confini acquisiti a quella data, ma questo li avrebbe ancora posti in contrasto con la Porta, obbligandoli peraltro a compiacere i propri protettori stranieri, entrando, fra l'altro, anche in conflitto fra loro.

Concludevo con la considerazione che questa politica irredentistica richiedeva un forte esercito, costoso da istituire e mantenere, e che tutto ciò comportava un prezzo politico non indifferente, accennando al legame che si può istituire fra *irredentismo e ritardo.*

Un altro tema che ho voluto considerare è quello della definizione **«polveriera balcanica»** applicata ad una regione, di cui, peraltro, nella cosiddetta Europa occidentale si esaltavano i progressi verso l'indipendenza nazionale e la costruzione statale delle sue parti.

Il governo ottomano, seguendo la nota tecnica del *divide et impera* – scrivevo – aveva buon gioco nel fomentare le contrapposizioni fra le varie componenti dei singoli «nazionalismi», che però si avvalevano anche di mezzi violenti, in Macedonia per esempio, innalzando il livello del conflitto e offrendo all'estero un'immagine negativa della regione, che si rifletteva sulla percezione generalizzata dei Balcani come «polveriera d'Europa»[8].

A questo concetto, d'accento negativo, si collega quello, ben noto, di

[7] Ivi, p. 144.

[8] Bianca Valota (a cura di), *La stampa italiana e la "Polveriera d'Europa". 1905-1919*, Milano: Unicopli, 1988.

«**ferocia balcanica».** A mio vedere l'uccisione di Alessandro I di Serbia nel 1903 e il ritorno in primo piano della questione balcanica segnano un momento importante su questa tematica.

L'assassinio della coppia reale, «l'eccidio di Belgrado»[9], che dominò le prime pagine di tutti i quotidiani, trovando visivamente posto, anche in anni successivi, nelle copertine di varie riviste attraverso i fantasiosi disegni di insigni illustratori[10] rafforzò l'immagine in chiaro-scuro dei Balcani, dei loro popoli, dei loro tentativi nazionali, disseminata dal Settecento al Novecento in una serie di resoconti di viaggio, di «studi», da parte di osservatori di varia estrazione, fra politici, diplomatici, geografi, scrittori e così via, che sarebbe opportuno, volta a volta, contestualizzare, per capirne la genesi.

In parte, ho cercato di capire come si sia articolata la dicotomia fra Ovest ed Est d'Europa fra XVIII e XIX secolo, facendone una premessa alla prima trattazione compiuta della Questione d'Oriente in connessione con la Guerra di Crimea, soffermandomi sulle immagini «italiane» di quella Questione, per dar conto di un punto di vista diverso da quello francese[11] o anglosassone solitamente citato nella letteratura sull'argomento[12]. Dalle opinioni di un viaggiatore originale come Vittorio Alfieri, feroce critico di Prussia e Russia, alla polonofilia largamente diffusa nell'opinione pubblica italiana, all'entusiasmo per le giovani nazioni di Mazzini, alle preoccupazioni del Piemonte di Cavour per il destino dei principati danubiani, si configura, al netto delle suggestioni per l'esotismo che avvolgeva nonostante tutto quelle popolazioni[13], una specifica sensibilità italiana all'Europa orientale[14]. Ho quindi cercato di valutare il problema di come sia nata e perché l'immagine stereotipata di una «ferocia balcanica» –

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[9] Elio Zorzi, *L'eccidio di Belgrado (1903)*, Milano: Mondadori, 1941.

[10] Si veda per es. la copertina della *Domenica del Corriere* del 21 giugno 1906.

[11] G. Lami, *L'Europe centrale et orientale au 19. siècle d'après les voyages du romancier et journaliste suisse Victor Tissot*, Paris: Champion, 2013.

[12] Norman Davies, *Europe East and West*, London: Pimlico, 2007; Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

[13] Stefano Bianchini, "La Serbia polveriera d'Europa. Politica estera e opinione pubblica in Italia di fronte alla 'Questione slava' (1908-1914)", in Bianca Valota (a cura di), *La stampa italiana e la polveriera d'Europa*, cit., pp. 13-27. Cfr. anche Delia Borcescu, "Oriente e Occidente: la Romania e la sua immagine nell'opinione pubblica italiana (1905-1917), ivi, pp. 33-55.

[14] Vojislav G. Pavlović (a cura di), *Italy's Balkan Strategies. 19th and 20th Century*, Beograd: Institute of Balkan Studies, 2014.

ribadita a più riprese fino ai giorni nostri – quasi *abnorme* nel panorama europeo, rimandando a molte importanti ricerche e riflessioni, condotte da prospettive ora più storiche ora più letterarie, fra cui quelle di Maria Todorova, Božidar Jezernik, Vesna Goldsworthy, Andrew Hammond[15].

Trovo convincente l'osservazione di Stefano Petrungaro che il concetto di «abnorme» presuppone che esista una «norma» e che questa sarebbe rappresentata dalle società dell'Europa occidentale, le quali si sarebbero precocemente sottoposte ad un processo di incivilimento che avrebbe permesso loro di «domare istituzionalmente la violenza, essendosi in più emancipate dalle sue forme più barbare e crude»[16]. Ma resta il fatto che vi sono fattori oggettivi che non rientrano nella categoria di stereotipi, anche se finiscono per alimentarla, che possono spiegare il fenomeno della violenza nei Balcani, e cioè, a mio avviso[17], «la situazione etnico-demografica, le particolari dinamiche di costruzione dello Stato, con il ricorso a truppe paramilitari e non soltanto in tempo di guerra, il fatto, per i diversi competitori nello stesso spazio, di dovere costruire l'agognato «Stato-nazione» contro un Impero o contro la concorrenza di un vicino in una situazione fluida, quale quella fra Ottocento e Novecento»[18].

In conclusione, affermavo che l'uso della violenza non è quindi il retaggio di una tradizione banditesca, primitiva, feroce, bensì il portato dell'adesione a un'ideologia modernizzatrice, che giustifica anche il ricorso a metodi violenti per realizzare il proprio progetto di costruzione statuale, sotto l'occhio complice delle grandi potenze che «da un lato deplorano come segno di arretratezza la mancanza di quella omogeneità delle popolazioni che impedisce l'affermazione dello Stato-nazione moderno, dall'altro condannano la violenta pulizia etnica brutalmente volta ad ottenerla. Così si configura una trappola di pregiudizi fatta di miscele di

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[15] Maria Todorova, *Immaginando i Balcani*, Lecce: Argo, 2014 [1997]; Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of the Imagination*, London: Hurst & Company, 2013 [1998]; Božidar Jezernik, *Europa selvaggia. I Balcani nello sguardo dei viaggiatori occidentali*, Torino: EDT, 2010 [2004]; Andrew Hammond, *The Debated Lands. British and American Representations of the Balkans*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007.

[16] Stefano Petrungaro, "Tra particolare e generale sulla violenza nei Balcani", in Rolf Petri (a cura di), *Balcani, Europa. Violenza, politica, memoria*, Torino: Giappichelli, 2017, pp. 23-36, p. 24.

[17] Si veda anche, fra altri, Paul Garde, *Les Balkans. Héritages et évolutions*, Paris: Flammarion, 2010.

[18] Giulia Lami, *Storia dell'Europa orientale*, cit., p. 228.

popoli e religioni destinate a diventare polveriere»[19].

Seguendo, come sempre, la cronologia degli avvenimenti, scomponendoli nei loro elementi più significativi, grazie alla struttura in paragrafi e agli spazi riservati ad una riflessione a tutto tondo, in un denso capitolo che va dall'annessione della Bosnia-Erzegovina alle guerre balcaniche (1908-1913) ho cercato di intrecciare il tema dell'evoluzione dei nuovi Stati nazionali dell'area del Sud-Est europeo – Romania inclusa – fino al scoppio e allo svolgimento delle guerre balcaniche.

Fra il 1878 ed il 1908 ebbero luogo – spiegavo – molte e importanti vicende in quella parte d'Europa che possono essere valutate da prospettive diverse, a seconda che si tenga conto dell'evoluzione dei piccoli Stati dell'area o del loro posizionamento all'interno dei generali equilibri fra l'Impero ottomano e le potenze, i cui interessi, ora convergono ora divergono. Si parla quindi di Grecia, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro e anche di Romania, alla cui realtà dedico una specifica attenzione, per capire la genesi e gli sviluppi delle guerre balcaniche, il loro impatto sulle irrisolte questioni albanese e macedone, in modo da ricostruire un altro tassello dell'articolata realtà europea alla vigilia della prima guerra mondiale.

Il riconoscimento degli Stati nazionali usciti dall'Impero ottomano in occasione del congresso di Berlino (1878) fu una tappa essenziale, ma vista come temporanea «sulla strada della ristrutturazione economica, sociale e soprattutto etnica e confessionale dei Balcani nel corso del lungo Ottocento», come ben ha illustrato Egidio Ivetic[20]. Sottolineavo a mia volta come la «ristrutturazione etnica e confessionale» portasse a una politica di «omologazione nazionale», dove non c'era spazio «per il diverso etnico e confessionale» soprattutto – ricorda Ivetic – se musulmano[21].

Ricostruivo come, in contemporanea, tutti i nuovi Stati si impegnarono a colmare il divario che percepivano con l'Europa occidentale, potenziando la propria rete interna ed estera di comunicazione, creando allo scopo banche nazionali, cercando anche di sviluppare l'industria, per quanto scontassero la ristrettezza dei propri mercati interni – aggravata dalla perdita dei contatti con i mercati ottomani e dalla concorrenza dei prodotti dei prodotti stranieri provenienti

[19] Rolf Petri, "Balcani. teleologia di una regione", in Idem (a cura di), *Balcani, Europa*, cit., pp. 1-22, p. 15.

[20] Egidio Ivetic, *Le guerre balcaniche*, Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006, p. 27.

[21] Cfr. anche Emanuela Costantini e Armando Pitassio (a cura di), *Ricerca di identità, ricerca di modernità. Il Sud-est europeo tra il XVIII e il XX secolo*, Perugia: Morlacchi, 2008.

dall'Occidente e dal centro Europa. Come hanno ben illustrato Marco Dogo e Armando Pitassio essi diedero anche corso, talvolta per motivi di prestigio, allo sviluppo delle capitali e delle città principali, dove si poteva respirare, a tratti, un'aria «europea[22], pur restando realtà essenzialmente rurali con una fisionomia diversa a seconda di quale era stato l'assetto di partenza della proprietà fondiaria: la questione agraria giocò per ciascuno un ruolo importante nella vita politica fra il momento della loro autonomia o indipendenza e lo scoppio delle guerre balcaniche. Di qui la disamina della questione agraria nei vari Paesi, dalla Romania alla Bulgaria, dalla Serbia e dal Montenegro alla Grecia, rimandando, spesso, ad analoghe dinamiche proprie di altre parti dell'Europa orientale in senso più ampio, dalle terre ungheresi a quelle polacche o russe, trattate in altri capitoli.

L'importante momento delle **guerre balcaniche,** al di là degli eventi bellici e del trattato finale del 1913 siglato a Bucarest, comporta il problema di un **bilancio**, che non è facile da tracciare.

Di queste guerre, non si può non sottolineare l'alto costo in vite umane, su cui le cifre sono a tutt'oggi incerte, e un costo economico pesante, a fronte di indubbi aumenti in termini territoriali e demografici, per ognuno degli Stati coinvolti. Diverso è il discorso per l'Impero ottomano, che perse la sua parte europea, mutando definitivamente la propria fisionomia e che, se conobbe un incremento demografico, lo dovette al massiccio, e traumatico, arrivo di musulmani dai territori perduti.

In genere, le guerre balcaniche vengono lette come l'immediato antefatto della prima guerra mondiale che cambiò talmente il quadro geopolitico internazionale da rendere impossibile una valutazione dell'efficacia delle soluzioni individuate dai trattati finali[23]. In realtà esse furono dettate principalmente dall'idea di reincorporare territori ritenuti di pertinenza «nazionale», sulla base di un concetto di irredentismo estremizzato. Al termine, tuttavia, i Balcani rimasero realtà multietniche, multilinguistiche e pluriconfessionali, tanto da ingenerare la domanda su quali popolazioni fossero state 'liberate' o conquistate.

Il punto più controverso – rilevavo – è quello della cosiddetta «altra guerra», quella vissuta dai civili, di cui per primo diede conto il rapporto

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[22] Marco Dogo e Armando Pitassio, *Città dei Balcani, città d'Europa. Studi sullo sviluppo urbano delle capitali post-ottomane*, Lecce: Argo, 2008.

[23] Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War*, London-New York: Routledge, 2000.

dell'organizzazione Carnegie Endowment for International Peace redatto da una Commissione internazionale – formata da professori universitari e personalità di vari Paesi – che aveva sostanzialmente indagato sulle violazioni delle convenzioni internazionali e sui crimini commessi durante le guerre del 1912-1913.

Il rapporto, uscito nel 1914 (e ripubblicato con un'introduzione di George Kennan nel 1993[24]), per quanto contestato in varie occasioni, allora e in seguito, e sostanzialmente accusato di avere contribuito alla creazione dello stereotipo della «violenza balcanica»[25] resta, a mio avviso, una fonte importante per valutare come molto alto il livello di «atrocità» commesse *da tutte le parti* in causa «che si ritirassero o che attaccassero, che compissero distruzioni nelle città o nei villaggi, che reagissero a precedenti violenze o che ne attuassero altre, che determinassero, con la forza o per la paura, l'esodo di intere popolazioni»[26].

In estrema sintesi, affermavo che per i Paesi balcanici queste guerre furono la prova di una conquistata «maturità», perché già dalla prima vittoriosa guerra balcanica si evidenziava l'esistenza di un nuovo blocco di Paesi pronti a lottare per conservare e implementare la propria identità. Da questo punto di vista, il bilancio era netto: la Serbia trasformava in realtà la sua candidatura a «Piemonte» dei Balcani, assurgendo a riferimento per gli slavi meridionali, dentro e fuori dalla Duplice monarchia; la Grecia raddoppiava la propria superficie e otteneva anche Creta, qualificandosi come potenza regionale nel Mediterraneo orientale. Da queste guerre nasceva poi un nuovo Stato, l'Albania, garantendole da allora un posto incancellabile nella carta geopolitica europea. La Bulgaria, nonostante la valentia sul campo di battaglia, non realizzò le sue mire sulla Macedonia, condannandosi così ad un revanscismo che avrebbe condizionato la sua politica estera nei decenni a venire.

In pratica, tutti gli elementi dei futuri revanscismi reciproci appaiono impliciti nelle soluzioni diplomatiche delle paci di Londra e di Bucarest, ma neanche una – prematura – spartizione della Turchia europea avrebbe oggettivamente potuto soddisfare le parti in causa. In conclusione, mostravo come si delineassero già allora gli schieramenti che sarebbero

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[24] *Other Balkan Wars: A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect*, with a New Introduction and Reflections on the Present Conflict by George F. Kennan, Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993.

[25] Maria Todorova, *Immaginando i Balcani*, cit.

[26] Giulia Lami, *Storia dell'Europa orientale*, cit., p. 283.

entrati in azione con lo scoppio della guerra mondiale nel luglio del 1914: Grecia, Serbia, Montenegro e Romania con l'Intesa, Bulgaria e Turchia con gli Imperi centrali.

La guerra mondiale è, naturalmente, il punto d'arrivo dell'analisi del «lungo Ottocento» che affronto nel manuale – che parte dall'epopea napoleonica – e, per certi versi, il mio lavoro, in linea con altri che l'hanno preceduto, avrebbe potuto concludersi con l'attentato di Sarajevo e le sue immediate conseguenze, anche perché il tema della guerra mondiale è talmente complesso, nei sui vari scenari e momenti, da rendere quanto mai difficile enucleare le vicende specifiche dell'Europa orientale. Ma non ho voluto sottrarmi al compito di ricostruire comunque un quadro complessivo (cap. 14), che permettesse poi di vedere come le varie aspirazioni maturate nel corso del XIX-XX secolo in Europa orientale trovassero, e in che misura, composizione ai tavoli di pace (cap. 16). E anche qui, non ho potuto sottrarmi all'onere di esaminare il processo di costruzione dell'Europa post-bellica, estendendo lo sguardo fino almeno al 1925.

Quando si parla di conferenza o pace di Parigi (1919) come termine *ad quem* del conflitto mondiale, o ancora, soltanto, di Versailles, si intende principalmente il trattato di pace con la Germania, qui firmato il 28 giugno 1919, perché gli altri quattro trattati che seguirono – Saint-Germain-en-Laye (con l'Austria, 19 settembre 1919), Trianon (con l'Ungheria, 4 giugno 1920), Neuilly (con la Bulgaria, 27 novembre 1919), Sèvres (con l'Impero ottomano, 10 agosto 1920) – vennero affidati a una conferenza degli ambasciatori che proseguì i lavori fino al 1920.

Per ciò che riguarda l'Europa orientale, il venir meno dell'assetto pre-bellico, caratterizzato dall'esistenza degli imperi russo, tedesco, austro-ungarico e ottomano, comportò una serie di problemi e questioni che non trovarono completa soluzione nel 1919-1920, anche perché in quelle enormi compagini il conflitto proseguì, in altre forme e con motivazioni diverse, in varie aree[27]. Bisogna quindi, per completezza, guardare al 1925 per avere un quadro adeguato della sistemazione post-bellica iniziata a Parigi.

Come è noto, la guerra ha visto anche l'esplodere della rivoluzione del 1917 in Russia, cui ho dedicato un capitolo specifico (cap. 15), obbligandomi ad una rilettura di quell'evento, proprio all'indomani del suo

[27] Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Fail to End, 1917-1923*, London: Allen Lane, 2016; Thomas W. Zeiler, *Beyond 1917: The United States and the Global Legacies of the Great War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

centenario, che ha comportato un grande sforzo di sintesi, fra interpretazioni diverse, contrastanti il più delle volte, per la sua enorme portata politico-ideologica che ha condizionato il XX secolo e, se vogliamo, gli inizi del XXI[28].

Proprio il caso russo, del resto, permette di capire come la guerra in Europa orientale non si arresti nel 1918, ma prosegua nella guerra civile russa, su un amplissimo fronte, coincidente con l'estensione dello spazio ex-imperiale, che conosce fra il 1918 e il 1922 forti spinte centrifughe, nonché l'intervento straniero. Emblematico il caso dell'Ucraina, quello della Bielorussia, del Caucaso meridionale, che pur non essendo negletti nel panorama storiografico, richiederebbero più ampie trattazioni, anche in un'ottica comparativa[29].

Il venire meno dei grandi imperi che dominavano la scena ottocentesca è accompagnato da sommovimenti che travalicano la data simbolo del 1918/19 e che giustificano il concetto, ormai storiograficamente attestato, di «guerra dopo la guerra»[30].

Della Russia abbiamo accennato, ma che dire dell'Impero ottomano? Del periodo che intercorre fra la pace di Sèvres e quella di Losanna? Del passaggio dall'Impero alla Repubblica, che vede nuovi conflitti come quello con i greci, che si conclude con la ben nota «catastrofe» greca, che vanifica accordi precedenti, con popoli che non godono di adeguata rappresentanza (curdi) o che sono stati brutalmente eliminati (armeni)?

Come si è detto, gli armeni – popolo senza Stato – avevano una forte presenza nei possedimenti degli Osmanli, dove furono sottoposti a un lungo calvario tra "massacri hamidiani" di fine Ottocento e l'avvio del genocidio nel 1915. Al *Metz Yeghern* (Grande male) ho dedicato un ampio paragrafo nel corso della trattazione della guerra, ma è un argomento su cui ho dovuto tornare parlando della fondazione della Repubblica turca.

Sostengo infatti che si è trattato di un progetto assolutamente laico – anche se condotto spesso in nome dell'Islam per raccogliere supporto da

[28] Marcello Flores, *La forza del mito. La rivoluzione russa e il miraggio del socialismo*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 2017.

[29] Timothy Snyder, *The reconstruction of nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2003; Aldo Ferrari, *Breve storia del Caucaso,* Roma: Carocci, 2007.

[30] Lucio Valent (a cura di), *La lunga guerra. I Balcani e il Caucaso tra conflitto mondiale e onflitti locali (1912-1923),* Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2020.

parte di etnie ottomane di fede musulmana – ascrivibile all'ideologia dei Giovani Turchi, di costruire un'identità nazionale turca.

Esso diede i suoi frutti, raccolti poi dalla Repubblica turca, che si trovò a gestire un Paese senz'altro privato a fine guerra della maggioranza dei suoi territori, ma etnicamente molto più omogeneo di quanto non fosse stato l'Impero ottomano. È questa origine traumatica che impedisce ancor oggi alla Turchia, nonostante un dibattito storiografico ormai ricco e articolato, e una forte pressione internazionale, di riconoscere il genocidio degli armeni.

Parlando dell'immediato dopoguerra, tuttavia, era ben necessario trattare anche della questione dell'Italia, per le conseguenze che ebbe sulla storia nazionale e perché, in fondo, fu un caso sintomatico dei faticosi compromessi con cui avvenne la ridistribuzione di territori in molte zone d'Europa.

La lunga diatriba per il confine orientale con la nascente Jugoslavia indusse la percezione di una «vittoria mutilata», a fronte di un poderoso apporto bellico contro l'Austria-Ungheria, con la conseguenza di favorire l'ascesa del fascismo, che fece del revisionismo una delle linee guida della sua politica estera.

Come è noto, sia l'idea di una grande Serbia, sia quella di uno Stato indipendente degli slavi del sud (serbi, croati, sloveni) erano state opzioni molto discusse ancora prima del conflitto; con il Patto di Corfù del 20 luglio 1917 aveva preso corpo l'opzione di creare uno Stato jugoslavo sotto i Karađorđević. Ora, dato che la Serbia veniva a trovarsi nella posizione di Stato vincitore, si riapriva il problema di come permetterle di realizzare i propri obiettivi, tenendo conto non tanto delle potenze sconfitte (Austria, Ungheria, Impero ottomano) ma di quella vincitrice a sua volta e cioè l'Italia. Il Regno dei Serbi, dei Croati e degli Sloveni veniva quindi fondato il I dicembre del 1918[31]. Tuttavia, il Patto di Londra stipulato nel 1915 dall'Italia con Francia e Regno Unito non prevedeva l'ipotesi di una disgregazione dell'Impero austro-ungarico e la conseguente nascita di uno Stato jugoslavo al proprio confine orientale, per cui era difficile stabilire fino a che punto dell'altra sponda dell'Adriatico potesse giungere l'Italia. Dall'impresa di Fiume al trattato di Roma del 1924 i rapporti con il nascente stato jugoslavo furono quindi estremamente tesi. Il nuovo Stato

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[31]Edgar Hösch, *Storia dei Balcani*, Bologna: il Mulino, 2006; Guido Franzinetti, *I Balcani dal 1878 a oggi*, Roma: Carocci, 2017 (nuova ediz.).

jugoslavo finì poi per comprendere i precedenti regni di Serbia e del Montenegro, l'ex provincia ungherese della Croazia e quella ex austriaca della Dalmazia, la piccola provincia già austriaca della Carniola, gli ex territori ungheresi della Bačka, del Banato occidentale, della Baranya e la Bosnia-Erzegovina, diventando uno Stato multietnico, nella migliore tradizione prebellica, tanto che già nel 1929 il suo sovrano, Alessandro I, ne mutò il nome in Regno di Jugoslavia, procedendo ad una centralizzazione culturale e amministrativa di segno autoritario, secondo un orientamento seguito da molti stati di neo formazione nell'epoca interbellica.

Proprio dalla complessità della sistemazione postbellica nella vasta area da me considerata, è nata la necessità di prolungare fino al 1925 la narrazione degli eventi.

Il paragone fra la Conferenza di Parigi e quella di Vienna – spesso avanzato dagli studenti stessi – è appropriato in sé, ma i due consessi internazionali trattarono aree e problemi non comparabili per estensione e articolazione: come dice brillantemente Margaret MacMillan i soggetti della cui trattazione fu investita la conferenza del 1919 andavano «dall'Artico agli Antipodi, da piccole isole nel Pacifico a interi continenti»[32].

Resta tuttavia aperta la questione se proprio l'assetto internazionale deciso a Parigi non sia stato all'origine della Seconda guerra mondiale. A mio avviso è una questione cui si sarebbe tentati di rispondere che ogni pace è provvisoria e contiene in sé elementi per futuri conflitti, ma, più compiutamente, faccio mia l'osservazione di Ennio Di Nolfo che «qualsiasi soluzione fosse stata adottata, sarebbero rimaste rivendicazioni insoddisfatte e nuove ragioni di crisi sarebbero state seminate. Si creava così un sistema di Stati completamente nuovo o distribuito secondo nuovi confini, perciò si creava una situazione precaria, dominata dall'instabilità e dal timore (o dalla speranza) del cambiamento. Prima ancora che i trattati fossero applicati, nascevano le propensioni revisionistiche e in almeno un caso (quello della Turchia) esse avevano partita vinta»[33].

E proprio per ciò che concerne l'area dell'Europa orientale e, in particolare, del Sud-Est europeo resta importante il tema dell'eredità del conflitto, di come i vari Paesi affrontassero la «prova della pace», ma

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[32] Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919. Six Months that Changed the World*, New York: Random House, 2003.

[33] Ennio Di Nolfo, *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 2 voll., I: *Dalla pace di Versailles alla conferenza di Potsdam, 1919-1945*, Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2015, p. 47.

questo ci trasporterebbe in un'epoca successiva al primo quarto del XX secolo[34].

Nel manuale che ho qui ripercorso è proprio lì che mi fermo, sulle soglie di un nuovo periodo, ugualmente complesso e meritevole di una trattazione manualistica, che lo renda accessibile, nei suoi contorni e problematiche, ad un ampio pubblico di studenti, soprattutto ora che le restrizioni poste alla didattica in presenza, obbligano a pensare a supporti didattici appropriati.

Come illustro in conclusione, fra Versailles e Locarno intercorsero ben 7 anni di consultazioni, di aggiustamenti, di ricerca di nuove intese, per cui quando a metà degli anni Venti le potenze chiusero il contenzioso più pesante, quello con la Germania, ebbero buone ragioni per convincersi di avere stabilizzato felicemente la situazione politica. Il Patto di Locarno – con i quattro trattati che lo componevano – sembrava infatti inaugurare un nuovo spirito nelle relazioni internazionali che il premio Nobel per la Pace a Chamberlain, Briand e Stresemann finiva per consacrare.

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[34] Alberto Basciani, *L'illusione della modernità. Il Sud-Est Europeo tra le due guerre mondiali*, Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2016.

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Small Power in Conflict with Great Power: A Case Study of the Serbia and Austro-Hungary Conflict

Dejan Marolov

Introduction

This paper analyzes the conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary that practically led to the First World War. All the relevant circumstances and actors of international relations are presented from the respective historical epoch. The focus will be on Serbia and Austria-Hungary. We will try to present the options that were open to Serbia, the choices it made, and why it was decided that way. The goal is to see how two neighboring countries that started with excellent relations ended up in a war of total destruction. In all of this, it is important to determine a certain paradigm of behavior of a small state in a conflict with great power as well as the possible influence of third forces as allies. The above will be analyzed through some aspect of structural realism. The conclusion is that both countries believed in the inevitability of a military solution sooner or later but the support of their great allies were crucial. For Austria-Hungary, this was a war to preserve its prestige and status as a great power and ensure its internal stability. For Serbia, it was a war for freedom and the preservation of independence which they hoped could grow into a war of unification with the rest South Slavic lands that were part of the Habsburg monarchy. The two neighbors were kingdoms and, hence, this was not an ideological clash in this part. Nonetheless, there seems to have been a direct clash between the multinational concept of the Habsburg Empire and the national concept of the Serbian kingdom.

The Conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary (Habsburg Monarchy): This is an interesting example from which many conclusions can be drawn. It is a conflict between a small and a large country, i.e., a small power in the case of Serbia and a large power in the case of Austria-Hungary.



[1]

Historically, this crisis has had its roots for many years, but definitely the moment that is most famous in the relations between the two countries is the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian Crown Prince, Franz Ferdinand, in Sarajevo in 1914. Unfortunately, this moment is well known in world history because it is taken as the official reason for the beginning of the First World War. In order to draw appropriate and credible conclusions on the collision of a small with a large force, as in this case, it is especially important not to perform the analysis in isolation that would be limited to the two countries. This is especially true due to the fact that no state exists on its own and is completely independent and unaffected by the

[1] Downloaded from Reddit.com 2020. *Political Map of Balkan States and Surrounding Regions 1912: Mapporn*. [online] Available at: <https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn/comments/cr7rfk/political_map_of_balkan_states_and_surrounding/> [Accessed 5 October 2020].

actions of other states. Previously, it is even more relevant to deal with a case like this one in which it is not about some isolated island states in a distant ocean, but a country like Austria-Hungary concentrated in the heart of Europe and its neighbor Serbia positioned on the Balkan Peninsula. The conflict itself, although bilateral, soon escalated into a world war. So it was not a local conflict as Austria-Hungary wanted, but other countries intervened (as Serbia to some extent wanted). At the beginning, it should be pointed out that in Austria-Hungary, they were quite aware of such a possible development, but they hoped that it would not happen. Thus, if there were interferences from other countries, they believed that they had a contingency plan.

Namely, right here, in the area of the European part of the dying empire - the Ottoman Empire (of which Serbia was a part, many years before it became independent) - the (often opposing) interests of the great powers intersected. Hence, it must be assumed that what was happening between the two countries to a greater or lesser extent affected not only their immediate neighbors, but also the great powers of the time, especially Russia, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, and even Germany. However, in order to get the full picture and the right conclusions, it is necessary for the analysis to take into account the international system at a certain period before the First World War. Of course, the fact that there was adequate progress in military technology and weapons production (in addition to "traditional" weapons of mass destruction such as nerve gases, etc.) must be taken into account. This is together with the fact that it flourished just before and during the First World War. Air warfare through the use of military aircraft has only emerged as a possibility. Yet, the world at that time was far from a nuclear weapon that does not yet exist. Of course, if it existed, it could give a completely different dimension to the conflict, and thus the analysis would be different. Hence, the potential threat to Serbia's security, however terrible, was reduced to a classic military threat, excluding the nuclear threat. In addition, it should be noted that the means of communication are far from the level as of today, but it still developed quite rapidly and were the most developed for that given moment in human history. Thus, with the perfection of the telegraph, messages arrived much faster than before. Already in 1900, the telephone was also discovered (although it was not in mass commercial use until the beginning of World War I). The existence of printing presses enabled the publication of newspapers and some mass propaganda. All this contributed to the

manner in which the crisis was managed, i.e., through classical diplomacy and away from the public eye. On the other hand, certain means of mass propaganda still existed but we can only assume how this crisis would have unfolded if modern technologies such as the internet and social networks were available just as we have them today.

1. The Secret Telegram

We will begin this analysis from the end, and the end of our analysis is undoubtedly the beginning of the First World War, also called the Great War, because it was the greatest war that humanity has ever experienced. In order to give the simplest introduction to the main dilemmas which will be analyzed later in the text, at the very beginning we processed the secret telegram sent by the British statesman, Sir Edward Gray, to the British ambassador in Vienna (July 27, 1914) less than two days before the beginning of First World War (First World War n.d). The purpose of this telegram is to get acquainted with the content of Sir Edward's conversation with the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in London. The points stated in the telegram are those which reveal the context of the problems between Serbia and Austria-Hungary and the possible implications. The telegram explains the Austro-Hungarian positions regarding Serbia. What is interesting is the fact that Serbia is written everywhere in the telegram as "Servia" instead of "Serbia", which indicates that perhaps the British policy did not give too much importance to this country and its policies. Trevelyan also confirms this, believing that British and American politics were not too familiar with Serbia and Serbs in general (Trevelyan, 2013). The telegram crystallizes the position of Austria-Hungary as dissatisfied with the incomplete acceptance of the requests sent to the Serbian government, which is accused of irredentism, propaganda, and making constant provocations. Serbia is characterized as a problematic neighbor. For Austria-Hungary, the events in Sarajevo (the assassination of Franz Ferdinand) showed in action what Serbian propaganda could lead to. As a result of all this, the United Kingdom (UK) is being asked to understand the possibility of Austria-Hungary by using force against Serbia. However, they emphasize that this use of force should not be seen as an act of aggression, but simply self-defense in a situation where all other options for Austria-Hungary are exhausted so as to ensure the security and safety of its borders. In addition, the Habsburg monarchy believes that through this way, the general European interest will be

satisfied. The representative of Austria-Hungary speaks with respect for the British people and its statesmen as a people with a high sense of justice. Therefore, they expect moral support and understanding for the future moves of Austria-Hungary. This is aside from all the beautiful phrases about peace, justice, order, self-defense and the likes. It is particularly interesting that the specific request to the UK to help, if necessary, keep hostilities local (First World War, n.d.). Therefore, the latter is essential for the success of the future action of Austria-Hungary. If the war remains a war between them and Serbia, Austria-Hungary will be able to do so successfully. The request for help to keep the war local clearly contains the awareness of the possibility of other states intervening. This refers, first and foremost, to Russia, which acts as a kind of patron state of Serbia. Its involvement would definitely complicate matters for both Austria-Hungary and the European continent, as it had the potential to provoke a larger war. From this, it seems clear that Austria-Hungary knew this risk and accepted it, but still thought that it could be avoided, among other things, because of the alliance with Germany (which we will write about later). Hence the official position of Austria-Hungary on that war is not about territory and border change, hoping that such defined military objectives will deter (or at least take away the argument) Russia from interfering. In addition, the telegram clearly states the position of the UK statesman that Serbia is already humiliated enough and had done quite enough by accepting most of the demands stated in the ultimatum. At the same time, the fear of the UK was visible that the start of military activities against Serbia without guarantees that Russia will not intervene in this war could cause unforeseeable consequences.

The previous telegram reveals and clarifies several dilemmas in the days before the First World War. First, Austria-Hungary was determined to go to war against Serbia despite accepting most of its demands set out in the ultimatum. Secondly, in all this, the possibility of Russian interference was quite real, but Austria-Hungary somehow hoped that it will not happen. Even if it did, it has Germany as its ally.

2. The Neighbors: Austria-Hungary and Serbia

The Austro-Hungarian state was a dual monarchy ruled by the Habsburg dynasty. It was one of the largest European powers with a population of about 50 million and the third largest country (by territory) in Europe. As its name suggests, it consisted of two parts, the Austrian

based in Vienna and the Hungarian based in Budim and Pest. Both parts had their own parliaments (Sked, 2014). They were united by the Habsburg monarch[2]. In this dual monarchy, the Austrian Germans and Hungarians were a privileged class and first-class citizens. All others were second-class citizens (Trevelyan, 2013). The monarchy was a real mixture of people from different nations with different languages and even religions. Within its borders lived a large multimillion Slavic population. Austria-Hungary consisted of Slavs of Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, Czech, Slovak, Polish, and Ukrainian descent.



The ethnic groups of Austria-Hungary in 1910 according to *Distribution of Races in Austria-Hungary* by William R. Shepherd, 1911.

It is interesting for our analysis to point out that Hungarians in Hungary numbered barely 45% of the total population (Trevelyan, 2013). The Austro-Hungarian army was quite large, consisting of 400,000 active troops and the ability to mobilize the reserves that were available at any time with just over 1,400,000 troops. It is estimated that as many as 8 million troops were mobilized during World War I. In addition, it had a navy, but the navy had no role against mainland Serbia (Austro-Hungarian Empire - Central Powers | NZHistory, New Zealand history online, 2020). Although it definitely did not have the most modern army in the world, it

[2] However, it was not a personal Union because there were other common bodies and policies, such as defense, foreign policy, etc.

was still a serious military force and undoubtedly one of the great European powers. Undoubtedly, however, one of the weaknesses of the monarchy was the fact that its army was also composed of various ethnicities that did not always "die" from wanting to get killed in the name of the emperor. Thus, over 60,000 soldiers during the First World War surrendered to the Serbian army in the sole desire not to be captured by the monarchy so they will bring them back to fight (Trevelyan, 2013, p.862). World War I would have a catastrophic outcome for Austria-Hungary, which would cease to exist as such, causing them to pay the price of a million killed and nearly two million wounded.

On the other hand, on a part of the southeastern border of the great monarchy was the neighboring state of the Kingdom of Serbia. It had a population of over 4.5 million[3] (Kingdom of Serbia - Allies | NZ History, New Zealand History Online, 2020). It seems that a large number of Serbs also lived in the monarchy, i.e., outside the borders of the free Serbian state. The former is especially true because in the Kingdom of Serbia, the entire Slavic population was not Serb[4].. Trevelyan is in similar positions (Trevelyan, 2013). However, at that time, there was a talk of creating an all-Slavic state for the southern Slavs, so the differences between the various southern Slavs were not considered a major obstacle. Hence, Serbia took the right and spoke as its own for all the southern Slavs in the monarchy, including not only Serbs but also Croats. The Slovenes were regularly mentioned as part of the future South Slavic state (although the Serbs made a clearer distinction with them as a different people of Slavic origin). Otherwise, the Serbian army, although relatively experienced, was still far from what modern European standards meant, but still was not to be underestimated. In 1914, before the outbreak of World War I, Serbia had about 90,000 troops at its disposal with about 400,000 reserves. The end of the First World War would cost Serbia more than a million victims, which given its total population is a really terrible percentage (Kingdom of Serbia - Allies | NZ History, New Zealand History Online, 2020).

From all the above, it is clear that we are talking about two asymmetric neighbors.

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[3] And that is after 1913 when the population of Serbia was significantly increased due to the confluence with the territory of Vardar Macedonia at the expense of the Ottomans.

[4] Thus, Macedonians lived in its southern part who due to the obvious difference with the Serbs were simply called “South Serbs”. So, those 4.5 million inhabitants were not all Serbs.



[5]

Namely, Austria-Hungary was a much larger country both in terms of population and in terms of the territory it covered. It was also part of the great European powers. However, because of the ethnic mix of its population in the era of growing nationalism, it looked like a kind of clumsy elephant in a greenhouse, metaphorically speaking. On the other hand was small Serbia, which, for a period after its independence, was under strong Austro-Hungarian influence and dependence, but later chose a complete change of this policy and began to see its great neighbor as an enemy.

It is inevitable to ask ourselves how and why the two neighbors got to war in 1914? What decisions were they guided by? Why did war seem like a desirable option for some and inevitable for others? Why were their

[5] Image taken from Nzhistory.govt.nz. 2020. *Map of The Austro-Hungarian Empire In 1914 | Nzhistory, New Zealand History Online*. [online] Available at: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/map-austro-hungarian-empire-1914> [Accessed 12 October 2020].

foreign policies as they were? In order to answer these questions and understand the functioning of the states and the interests of the great powers in this region in the international system in the world before the First World War, we will have to go back to not one, but several steps back in history. Thus, one must first understand the so-called Eastern question and later policies, even from the time when Serbia did not even exist as a state but was only part of the Ottoman Empire. It should be first as an ordinary province and later as an autonomous entity that would eventually become an independent state. The analysis of the policies of the great powers in the long period before the First World War is necessary to be done in order to successfully perceive and understand the complexity of the Austro-Hungarian-Serbian relations and the reasons that led to the war in 1914.

3. Historical Retrospective and the Policies of the Great Powers

Consequently, the once powerful Islamic Ottoman Empire stretched on three continents, and in Europe, it had already penetrated deeply through the Balkan Peninsula. Its ambitions did not stop there, but had pretensions in the rest of Christian Europe. There seems to be a key event that marked the end of plans for its future expansion. For instance, the unsuccessful invasion of Vienna in 1683 was the moment when, for the last time, the Ottoman Empire seriously threatened the survival of another great European power. Only a few years later, out of possible booty, Austria turned into a predator against the Ottomans. Already in 1697 at the Battle of Senta (in present-day Serbia), the Ottoman army suffered a severe defeat at the hands of the Holy League led by the Habsburg Monarchy. As a result, the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the Treaty of Karlowitz (modern-day Serbia) in 1699, which would cost the Ottomans large territorial concessions at the expense of the Habsburg monarchy, including the former Ottoman territories of Slovenia, Croatia, and Hungary. After a long time, this was the first and serious loss of territory for the Ottoman Empire, which got used to and functioned in a way of expansion and constant conquest of new territory. Nevertheless, this meant something else. Part of the Serb Slav population (in Banat and Croatia) and a large part of the Croatian Slav population (except for a small part living in Bosnia and Herzegovina) found themselves on different sides of the border. It can be seen that the two empires did not attach any importance to the national character, and they determined the feelings and desires of

the local population and the borders by force. Thus, this did not make the two empires bad by definition, but empires did not function according to a national concept and at a time when representative democracy and caring for the wishes of the people were far from a serious reason for politics to be conducted by the ruling elites. From this, it can be concluded that the relations between the Habsburg monarchy and the Ottoman Empire were far from excellent. Thus, at first the Ottoman Empire was a direct threat to the survival of the monarchy, and after the unsuccessful campaign in Vienna (and for some time thereafter), the Habsburgs became a threat to the Ottoman territorial integrity in the European part of their empire and for literally taking away a great part of their territory. However, as we have said, this event was only a turning point, i.e., a kind of announcement for the beginning of the end of the powerful Ottoman Empire, which for a long time was a factor and part of the European powers.

In this period of time, we cannot talk about relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. This is for the simple reason that the former did not yet exist as a state and is within the Ottoman Empire. What is important to point out in this section is that the Southern Slavs (including the Serbs) found themselves divided within two large empires: Ottoman in the south and Austro-Hungarian in the north. This fact will bring cultural, economic, social, and other differences between the South Slavic population that would be visible in the years to come, perhaps even during the future Yugoslav federation which would again disintegrate into a bloody civil war in the early 90s of the 20th century.

For almost a century after the unsuccessful Ottoman campaign in Vienna, what later became known as the Eastern Question was slowly opening up. Furthermore, this term meant a series of questions about the future redistribution of forces in the European part of the Ottoman Empire after its expected destruction[6]. That this multinational and multi-confessional empire was moving towards disintegration is also shown by the synonym that was used for it. Namely, it was often called the sick man from the Bosphorus (for more on the Eastern question see Sowards, 1996). The Balkans or the region of Southeast Europe, which was part of the Ottoman Empire, was the crossroads of many interests of the great powers, and the region was composed of a number of ethnic, linguistic, and

[6] Sometimes, the term "Balkanization" is used as a synonym for fragmentation of a certain country into smaller parts.

religious groups concentrated in a relatively small area. Later, with the processes of nationalism and national feeling and awakening, these groups would want to have their own states, and those who succeed would want to expand their borders, leading the region in constant turbulent waters.

1774 is a particularly important year because that year ended the war between the two great powers, the Ottoman Empire and Russia, in which the second side emerged as the undoubted winner. The Kuchuk kainarji agreement was signed in which Russia gained significant benefits at the expense of the Sultan's sovereignty. Thus, Russia was given the limited right to "interfere" in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire and to act as a kind of protector of Christians in the empire. The second important moment was gaining access to the Black Sea, i.e., the right to uninterrupted use of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles and the possibility of unimpeded naval trade with the Ottoman Empire. This agreement was only a step towards the idea of Tsarist Russia to achieve much greater goals for the Ottomans. Namely, their "final and ideal" goal was the de facto and physical control of Istanbul together with the Bosphorus and the Dardarnelles, thereby providing unimpeded access to the Mediterranean, which in turn provided the necessary basis for further expansion plans. However, as we shall see later, such an idea for the rest of the European powers seemed too megalomaniacal to be allowed because the balance of power would be significantly shifted in Russia's favor. Hence, Russia, faced with the impossibility of practically achieving its imagined projected goals, had to be satisfied with the existing benefits through which in the future it would try to maintain the possibility of direct influence within the Ottoman Empire through the right to "care" for the Christian population. This legal basis resulting from peace with the Ottomans gave ample room for maneuver to a large population of the Orthodox religion, including Slavic (such as Serbs), and also non-Slavic peoples such as the Greeks and Romanians, etc. Additionally, the pan-Slavic movement was promoted as a tool for Russia. However, the other great powers did not rest and could not allow a change in the balance of power in favor of Russia. Hence, they balanced their involvement and acted (seemingly) to restore some of the Ottoman sovereignty. Russia's privileged position is reduced formally and legally with the new treaty signed in Paris in 1856. This agreement does not only mean the deprivation of Russia's privileges in the Black Sea, but also of its status and the exclusive right of guarantor of the Christian population in the Balkans. Thus, now more great powers have become guarantors.

Virtually everyone was given the right to interfere in the internal affairs, but none had exclusivity. Hence, when it could no longer directly implement its original plans for physical domination, Russia reoriented its policy in support of the Orthodox peoples (such as the Greeks), especially the Slavs (such as the Serbs and Bulgarians), to the creation of independent states. According to this Russian projection, these new states were to become independent of the Ottoman Empire, and essentially dependent on Tsarist Russia, which would act as one of their Orthodox or Pan-Slavic patrons and guarantors of their security. Thus, the creation of the Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian states was more or less directly (even militarily) supported by Tsarist Russia. However, Russia did not always secure control of these states. In Greece, the influence had to be shared with the UK, France, etc. In the example of Serbia, however, at some point it is acknowledged that it fell under the sphere of Austro-Hungarian influence primarily because of its geographical proximity. Later, things will change again, and Serbia would become their partner. In later developments, Russia will be particularly affected by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) by Austria-Hungary. In order to counter Austro-Hungarian influence, Russia would support the formation of the Balkan Alliance, which would later enter into a final showdown with the Ottoman Empire over its European part. Eventually, Russia will end up at war with Austria-Hungary in support of its ally, Serbia. We write about this in more detail below. What is significant about our analysis is that these policies of Russia have remained firmly ingrained in the Serbs' consciousness of Russia as their Orthodox and fraternal Slavic protector in the great and powerful Muslim Ottoman Empire. All these developments at the international level forced the great European powers, in an attempt to balance, to intervene more in the internal affairs of the Ottomans, fearing the excessive influence of Russia. Russia and Austria-Hungary were undoubtedly the two major European powers whose interests were the strongest on the Balkan Peninsula.

From the above, it is undoubtedly seen that one of the greatest threats to the security of the Ottoman Empire was the Russian Empire. Hence, the Ottomans had no choice but to seek allies in other major powers in order to balance the pressure from Russia. This choice of foreign policy of the Ottoman Empire was in line with other great powers at the time, such as the UK, France, and later Germany, who did not even want to think about the realization of Russian aspirations in relation to the Ottoman

territories. It should come as no surprise that the Ottomans allied with the United Kingdom and France in the war against Russia in 1856, known as the Crimean War, which ended with the treaty mentioned above. Normally, the victory over Russia was far from a "pure" Ottoman victory over the Russians. The assistance of the United Kingdom and France in winning this war and thus annulling the previously acquired exclusive rights of Russia in the Ottoman Empire was obvious. However, this alliance had its price. Now it was not only the Russians who had the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ottomans. Now, such rights had been acquired by the UK and France. Hence, the Ottomans had to be careful that the balance they struck at the expense of Russia did not reflect too negatively on them and that the Ottoman Empire would completely fall into the arms of another power. With all these developments, the status of the Ottoman Empire as one of the great powers was definitely called into question. However, due to its important geostrategic positions, as well as its ability to maintain its balance of power and prevent ambitious Russian expansionism, the Ottoman Empire was artificially allowed to maintain its status as a major European power for some time. In practice, however, the sultan often had to be content with only nominal, not real, and real control of parts of his territory[7]. In addition, relations with the new Balkan states created with the support of the great powers were bad for the simple reason that they had their own expansionist policies at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. It was interesting for Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece that from provinces in the Ottoman Empire, they would become independent states and a direct threat to it. In these intertwined negative relations for the empire, even its allies often at times acted clearly against the Ottoman Empire, e.g., during the Greek war of independence, when the UK and even France clearly sided with the Greeks. Earlier during the time of Napoleon, France was a threat to certain Ottoman provinces, etc. or when the UK even fought directly against the Ottomans for Egypt. However, due to the threat from Russia, the Ottomans were forced to seek allies. At the same time, they tended not to rely on just one great power on which they would be completely dependent. That is why, over time, it strengthens its alliance with Germany as a counterweight to the influence of the UK, and they probably succeeded in that after 1878. Of course, the alliance with

[7] Such is the case of BiH, Bulgaria, and Serbia which before becoming legally independent were formally part of the Ottoman Empire as a kind of territories with wide autonomy.

Germany was not built too easily due to the strong ties with Austria-Hungary, which in turn had certain pretensions towards the Ottoman Empire, and to some extent helped the Serbian uprisings against the Ottomans. However, one thing is certain—Ottoman foreign policy had a clear purpose. Thus, they lost a little territory and maintained the status quo. The occasional riots and uprisings within the empire and especially the brutal way in which they were suppressed did not help in that goal due to the negative image in Europe. Finally, the Ottoman Empire, significantly shaken by the war with Italy and the uprising in Albania, found itself in a new war against the Balkan states organized in the Balkan Alliance in which Serbia was one of the key members. At this moment when the empire was quite exhausted from the war with Italy and the riots in Albania, it asked for more direct help from Austria-Hungary in neutralizing the Serbian threat, but did not receive a more specific answer and help. The former is particularly interesting because Austria-Hungary itself, as seen below, felt threatened by Serbia, but still had only a limited role without military action on ground during the Balkan wars. The outcome of this war would be the end of Ottoman rule in Europe and the creation of a larger and more powerful Serbia.

Where was Austria-Hungary in all this? The two empires bore great similarities in that they were multinationals. The eventual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of nation-states could be a dangerous precedent that could be repeated in the Austro-Hungarian state. However, as stated earlier, their relationship was far from ideal. Consequently, with the attack on Vienna, the Ottomans were a threat number one to the survival of the state of the Habsburg monarchy, so that things change after the annexation of Hungary and Croatia by the Habsburg monarchy. Austria-Hungary's claims to influence were directed at the Balkan Peninsula, which was also the European part of the Ottoman Empire. However, due to the great Russian threat to the Ottoman Empire, as well as other policies of the great powers and the creation of smaller states in the Balkans, Austria-Hungary had to reorient its expansionist policy from a state that was a threat to the Ottomans to a state that wanted to maintain the status quo, that is, it did not want the destruction of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, it did not want it as an overly powerful neighbor either. The last territorial expansion at the expense of the Ottomans was BiH. After the Congress in 1878, the territory of BiH was practically ceded to the administration of Austria-Hungary, but under the nominal

sovereignty of the Ottoman sultan. However, in the years that followed and the turmoil inside the Ottoman Empire, the revision of the Constitution was announced, which hid the possibility of re-integrating BiH into the Ottoman Empire. That is why the Habsburg monarchy decided on the formal legal annexation of BiH in 1908 (Urban, 2014). After this, Austria-Hungary had a rather conservative policy of maintaining the status quo. So from 1908, while other great powers expansionist fought and conquered colonies, Austria-Hungary had a policy of not changing its borders (Hannig, 2015). Of course, the previous claim can be disputed due to the indirect involvement in the Balkan wars in connection with the creation of an Albanian state (which we write about below). However, this move (the annexation of BiH) also complicated relations with Serbia and Russia. Furthermore, Austria-Hungary did not look with too much sympathy at the new Slavic Balkan states that were conceived as national as opposed to the multinational concept of monarchy. The former is especially true, as we have already stated, that the monarchy also had a huge Slavic population in its composition. Thus, when it became clear that Serbia would be a separate independent Slavic state, Austria-Hungary tried to "help" it by putting it under full economic (and any other) influence. However, as we will see below, Serbia would later become independent of Austro-Hungarian influence and, further influenced by Russia, enter the Balkan Alliance, which in turn would be victorious over the Ottoman Empire. Of course, all this meant a bigger and stronger Serbia. Austria-Hungary, however, did not decide on military intervention on the part of the Ottomans, which would try to maintain the status quo and prevent Serbia from becoming too powerful. Austria-Hungary seems to have had many dilemmas about taking a foreign policy course on this issue. Nevertheless, there were projections as to how much enlargement of Serbia could be tolerated, especially in the part of the projected Austro-Hungarian interest in the Western Balkans as their exclusive zone of influence. However, relations with Serbia gradually cooled starting with the economic war, then the annexation of BiH (accepted very painfully in Serbia, which had ambitions there) through indirect interference during the Balkan wars, until the key moment of declaring war in 1914. With regard to Bulgaria, the issue was complicated, but in the long run there was some idea that it should, at least, be in some kind of alliance with the monarchy. This happened during the First World War. The policy was similar with Romania, where on the one hand the monarchy was an ally in the face of

the threat from Russia. However, on the other hand, the monarchy was already inhabited by a large number of Romanians who were a kind of second-class citizens. Regarding the possible scenario for the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in its European part, Austria-Hungary projected its interests in the back of the Balkan Peninsula.

Speaking of the western part of the Balkan Peninsula, it should be noted that the Ottoman Empire (in which it was a part until the Balkan wars), Serbia, which wanted an exit to the Adriatic, Montenegro, the Albanian movement, and Italy were also interested in it. Otherwise, it should be noted that Italy was a country that was part of the European powers, but with a more recent date. Sometime before 1871, in fact, there was no Italian state, but numerous small states scattered across the Peninsula (although the unification process had already begun). Only after their unification did Italy gradually join the elite club of European powers. What needed to be pointed out is that the united Italian state was created precisely by a war against Austria, which wanted to dominate the small divided Italian states. After this, the Austro-Hungarian policy shifted to the Balkans, but this victory of the Italian idea of unification against the Austrian plans for domination would much later be a guide, example, and motivation for the Serbian plans to unite the South Slavs in one country and, if necessary, through war with Austria-Hungary. Long after joining this elite club of European powers, Italy was one of its weaker members. Geographically, it was relatively close to the even weaker Ottoman Empire which was falling apart. Hence, it seemed natural to try to concentrate its influence in parts of the Ottoman Empire. Projections of Italian influence gravitated along the Balkan-Ottoman part of the Adriatic, primarily in the Western Balkans and Albania (but also Dalmatia and other parts of Austria-Hungary). Additionally, when a chance was provided for that in 1911, Italy invaded and occupied the Dodecanese islands and Libya from the Ottoman Empire. In this way, Italy positioned itself against the Ottomans and also against Serbia (and Montenegro) who aspired to the Adriatic coast. Of course, this policy of Italy did not make Greece particularly happy too, but most importantly, it brought it into direct conflict with Austro-Hungarian interests. During the annexation of BiH, the change of spheres of influence and the Balkan wars, Italy did not play any major direct role and opportunistically acted that in case of possible border changes, it should also receive compensation. However, its war with the Ottomans over Libya was one of the key moments for the Balkan

states to decide to go to war with the Ottomans at that very moment starting (correctly) from the assumption that the empire was weakened by the war with Italy.

Similar to Italy, Germany was a country that joined the elite club of European powers only after its unification under Bismarck. Probably not until after 1871 we can talk about Germany as part of the European exclusive club of great powers. However, there was a crucial difference with Italy. Germany was a far faster growing and more powerful country than Italy. Its aspirations and policies were aimed at changing the existing balance of power worldwide. The Balkans was just a part of this for which they were not overly interested. As we have already mentioned, their policy was to function as a kind of patron of the Ottoman Empire, to develop economic relations, to maintain the status quo, and to create an ally in the face of Istanbul. This policy was part of Germany's broader strategy of creating alliances, in order at some point to be able to impose itself as a factor that would change the balance of power and at least become equal, and perhaps more powerful than UK and France. It was within this policy (among other reasons) that the partnership and alliance with the naturally close and Habsburg monarchy was built, where the Austrian Germans were a key deciding factor. However, because of them, Germany would later be pushed into the Balkan issues and problems. It should be noted that at times, they even corrected their policy towards the Ottomans in order to please the monarchy in their desire for annexation of BiH (which in turn contradicted the policy of maintaining the status quo towards the Ottomans). However, over time, Germany managed to establish itself as the number one ally of the Ottoman Empire, which in turn led them into conflict with Russia, the UK, and France. Germany had no interest in creating numerous Slavic states in the Balkans, and they supported the Austro-Hungarian ambitions (no matter how much interest it had) for the annexation of BiH and also later at the crucial moment of the Austro-Hungarian declaration of war on Serbia before the outbreak of World War I. Germany believed that Russia would think twice before declaring war on Austria-Hungary if it meant a war with Germany, and further believed that Russia was not ready for war at that time and would take a long time to mobilize. With the second scenario, Germany to some extent wished for war with Russia at that moment. What is interesting to us is that there was a minor likelihood of Austria-Hungary going to war with Serbia without clear German support.

In terms of the UK, we can say that it was undoubtedly one of the most powerful forces. As the most developed industrial power, it had a special interest in providing raw material routes to their colony in India. In accordance with the above, their interests in the Ottoman Empire were predominantly concentrated in the eastern Mediterranean and the Suez Canal. In order to secure its own direct influence in the region of the eastern Mediterranean and also in the Balkans, the UK intervened against the Ottomans to create a Greek state in the Peloponnese. As for the Suez Canal, it was de facto controlled by the UK, and the sultan had to be content with only nominal control. On that account, the UK was on the side of the Ottomans in the war with Russia. Of course, it was previously in the British interest as well, because their policy towards the Ottomans was to be a factor of balance. As explained earlier, the Ottoman Empire was in decline. As a result, it was expected that some of the European powers would try to impose themselves as a factor in the empire. UK did not allow that to happen. Due to the factual situation, it was Russia and so the UK opposed Russia by not giving them a monopoly. As stated earlier, they directly intervened in the Ottoman-Russian war in 1853 on the side of the Ottomans, thus saving them from certain defeat. However, this policy was slowly abandoned, and the place of the UK was slowly taken by Germany. Already, in the war between the Ottomans and Russia in 1878, UK remained neutral. We can freely say that for many years, the UK was the basis of the balance of Russian influence in the Ottoman Empire for a long time, just before the Greek uprising in 1821 until 1878. The change in this policy was probably due to the realization that it was impossible to keep the Ottoman Empire and the expectation of its imminent collapse (at least in Europe). However, the UK aimed to ensure that no major power secures dominance over the former Ottoman territory. British's neutrality (with promised support for a possible deepening war in Asia) cost the Ottomans the takeover of Cyprus in 1878 and the Suez Canal, i.e., Egypt in 1882. After all this, there was only some nominal control. At the same time, it maintained its influence in the Balkans through the Greek state as its patron. The Ottoman Empire was also important to many British businesses. Hence, the UK was trying to maintain the status quo for as long as possible. When the end of the Ottoman Empire in Europe was already apparent, the UK supported the creation of small new independent states in response to some ideas of dividing the empire among other European powers. The Ottoman Empire responded by approaching Germany, which

would eventually end in a military alliance during World War I and the war with the United Kingdom. Regarding Serbia, the UK did not have any major ties with it, which it considered a small insignificant state. However, during the First World War, the UK ended up as an ally of Serbia, but the reasons for that would not be an alliance between the two countries, but the unfortunate German action in neutral Belgium and the fear of changing the balance in Europe due to the possibility of Germany defeating France and Russia.

In this analysis, we cannot ignore the role of France as one of the European powers. In general, we can state that its role in the Ottoman Empire for most of the time mainly had an economic interest. However, if we go back in time, we will see that the time of Napoleon France even had big political plans for the Ottoman Empire. The French ambitions to control the Suez Canal and beyond Egypt and Syria (then Ottoman provinces) were no secret, especially in 1798 with the French invasion of Egypt and Syria. However, after the definitive defeat of Napoleon, the whole policy of France was changed. Trade with the Ottomans came first because it was very profitable for the French. However, over time and as the years passed after the heavy defeat of Napoleon, France tried to regain its place as one of the great European powers that should not be ignored. Hence, fearing that Russia and the UK would achieve complete domination and influence, it intervened jointly with them against the Ottomans in 1820 in order to create a Greek state. It also intervened in the Crimean War on the side of the Ottoman Empire. Through this way, it secured a strong political influence in the Ottoman Empire, following the Russian example. In addition, it received the right from the Ottomans to be a kind of protector of the Catholics living in the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, France maintained special ties with Romania, with which it was culturally close, following the example of Russian pan-Slavic influence. Romania was also seen as a bastion in the middle of Slavic culture. Through these instruments, France ensured a balance with Russia and also with the UK. However, after the creation of Serbia, the French tried to impose themselves as a factor despite the strong Austro-Hungarian and Russian influence. In fact, the acquisition of Serbian economic independence was due, among other things, to the cooperation with France, which was seen as very favorable in Serbia and friendly relations developed. Eventually the two countries ended up in the same alliance during World War I (and World War II).

The international system before the First World War was a system of balance of power between major European powers such as the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, Italy, and Germany. There was no universal organization (such as the League of Nations after World War I, for example) where problems could be discussed, resolved, or a collective defense promoted. Instead, there was a system of occasional ad hoc congresses. Normally, only invited countries participated where practically the great European powers decided for the rest of the world (usually without representatives from the rest of the world). As we explained earlier, although they were part of this exclusive club, they were not equal in their power, and each of them had its own interests. When it became clear in time about the imminent collapse of one of them - the Ottoman Empire, it opened the Pandora's Box of influence and control of its territories. This moment had a strong psychological impact on Austria-Hungary, which, in many ways, had features in common with the Ottoman Empire. Austria-Hungary was determined not to allow itself to be the second sick man, this time from the Adriatic. Otherwise, it is a long period of time in which too much technology for communication between countries was not used. Nevertheless, things changed more and more with the rapid development of technology, both in the field of communications and in the military industry (especially during World War I). It can be said that in principle, the diplomats or ambassadors in foreign countries enjoyed great comfort and authority in presenting and interpreting the views of their home countries, not only because the official response from the home country could not always be expected, but also because the ambassadors themselves came from the aristocracy, often bloodily related to royal families (Sowards, 1996). Diplomatic language, i.e., the language used in diplomacy between diplomats and in communication with the representatives of the host country, was French. Hence, when diplomats were sent to a foreign country, they had to understand French, but not necessarily the language or local languages spoken by the population. In addition, this was not considered an omission because popular views and wishes were rarely taken into account in decision making. Diplomacy was simply considered something higher and something that the ordinary masses certainly could not understand. Diplomacy, negotiations, decision making, joining and withdrawing from alliances, and even issues of war and peace have often been conducted in secret, out of the public eye. As we earlier stated, efforts have been made to

use more modern means of communication in the service of diplomacy. Thus, for example, with the improvement of the telegraph, the messages arrived much faster than before, and already in 1900 the telephone was also discovered. Of course, these technologies have gradually had an impact on reducing the degree of independence. Furthermore, it has also introduced a kind of greater control over ambassadors who over time from co-creators became more and more interpreters of the policy of their countries.

4. The Creation of Serbia and the Basis of its Policies

4.1. Creating a Serbian Nation

Once we have made a general analysis of the international system and its main actors, i.e., the major powers, we can move on to a more detailed elaboration of Serbia, its creation and policies. In order to better understand the reasons and decisions that led to the war with Austria-Hungary in 1914, we will begin the analysis quite broadly and from a later date. A century earlier, the Serbs lived divided into two large multinational empires, ruled by dynasties, and ethnicity was not given much importance, at least not in the modern understanding of things[8]. The former was especially true of the Ottoman Empire (which included the entire territory of what would later become an independent Serbian state), where all were subject to the sultan. Practically, the only difference that was made and actually valid was the division between Muslims and Christians. However, over time, that would change. Undoubtedly, the national movements, through their actors, have done their thing. Yet, national awakening and nationalism did not come overnight. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the national awakening was combined with other objective factors. Thus, in the subsequent period after the defeat of the Ottomans in the wars with Austria mentioned above, a large number of Janissaries[9] who took part in the campaigns, along with a certain Muslim population fleeing from the territories occupied by Austria-Hungary, settled on the northern border of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, this is with a significant number in the Belgrade pashalak (the place where the future Serbian state would be formed). The pashalik was led by Haji Mustafa as a

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[8] They were often recruited into the armies of their home countries and engaged in fratricidal wars.

[9] Turkish soldiers taken as children from Christian families to fight for the Ottomans.

representative of the sultan. It was with their arrival that things changed in the pashalik. Until then, the coexistence of the Serbian Orthodox (mainly rural) population and Muslims under the leadership of Hadzi Mustafa was relatively harmonious. Mustafa was valued by both the Muslim and Christian-Serb populations. However, it was the newly settled Janissaries who longed to rule and gain power, who killed Mustafa, after which they de facto took over the management of the Belgrade pashalik. More precisely, their leaders known as the four dahis came into power. Their government was largely autonomous and was beyond the control of the central government in Istanbul. The horror of the Orthodox population under their control included theft, rape, and all other forms of violence. Anarchy simply prevailed. Otherwise, the takeover of power in the Belgrade pashalik in 1801 was made possible, among other things, by the weakening of the central government in the empire and its preoccupation with the threat of Napoleonic France. Thus, in 1798, the sultan transferred a good part of the troops in the Balkans to Egypt because of the possibility of invasion by Napoleon. Of course, this contributed to the four dahis taking over the rule of the pasha without any serious resistance a few years later in 1801.

With all this, it can be concluded that the position of the ordinary Serbian peasant (and that was the vast majority of the population) had drastically deteriorated. The population was forced to pay double duties, one to the sultan's legal tax collectors and one illegal, imposed by local authorities. Of course, everything previously influenced the process of creating a common sense and the need to reject injustices, the arbitrariness of the government and the new taxes, which in turn accelerated the Serbian awakening and creates a sense of nationality. However, we cannot say that the feeling of uniqueness did not exist before. Even previously, the Serb population had a certain awareness of uniqueness. As we have stated earlier, in the Ottoman Empire, the basic difference made among the population was in the religious sense. Hence, the Serbs knew that they were not Muslims. Also, the Ottoman government did not force the local population to change their religion, but at the same time there were clear written and unwritten benefits for Muslims. In addition to their faith, Serbs could see their uniqueness through the fact that they had their own Slavic language, different from Turkish (the official language of the empire and the language of the Muslim majority in it) and also Greek (otherwise also the language of the Greek Orthodox people, but also the language in which

the services in the churches took place). The identity of the Serbs in the empire was further strengthened after the events after the failure of the Ottomans in the siege of Vienna. As stated earlier, one of the consequences of this adventure of the Ottomans was the relocation of the border to the south, which was now practically the border with the Belgrade pashalik on the Ottoman-Austro-Hungarian border. This contributed to the emergence of new ideas, views, and opportunities for Serbs. Thus, for instance, opportunities for cross-border trade opened up, and contacts between Serbs on both sides of the border gradually intensified. Some Serbs were educated in Austria-Hungary, where they received ideas for new European movements. Through these contacts, the Serbs of the Ottoman Empire had the opportunity to see firsthand the existence and functioning of a Christian state where Christians are the bearers of power and even a privileged class. Through these contacts, Serbs could see additional features of their own identity. Thus, the difference with the German language, between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, etc., was obvious. This conflict of the Ottomans with the Austro-Hungarians was important for another moment for the Serbs. During the war, there were Serbs who were recruited and served in the armies on both sides. This way, part of the Serbian rural population gained military experience and some knowledge of military tactics and ways of warfare.

We can probably say that the Serbian national movement was also encouraged, at least indirectly, by all these contacts and by the possibility for the Serbs to see how a Christian empire like Austria-Hungary worked. We should not forget that Austria-Hungary once had certain pretensions towards the European part of the Ottoman Empire. Hence, it probably wanted to weaken it through a certain influence and also gain certain sympathies from the Serbian Christian population. All this, combined with Russia's increasingly aggressive policy towards the Ottomans, began to create a feeling among the Serb population that defiance was nevertheless possible and even resistance to the Muslim Ottoman Empire, even from the local Orthodox population.

4.2. The Serbian Uprisings

Everything previously written about contributed to the start of the first Serbian uprising in February 1804 in the Belgrade pashalik (Smederevski Sanchak). However, there is another element that was important, and we have not mentioned it until now. Previously, Serbs in

the Belgrade pashalik enjoyed some minimal autonomy. Thus, they had the opportunity to collect the tax themselves and elect their own village leaders known as princes. There was even a certain Serbian militia, which was in the service of the sultan. Now it was those Serbian princes, parts of the militia and, of course, ordinary peasants who rebelled in the mountains and started the First Serbian Uprising. According to some estimates, it was not more than 30,000 people, which is not to be underestimated in relation to the size of the Belgrade pashalak. The leader of this movement that would later grow into an uprising is Karadjordje, the founder of the dynasty of the same name[10]. He enjoyed great popularity among the Serb population for his works as a local village leader - a prince. What is interesting about him is that he also had significant military experience serving in the Serbian regiment within the Austro-Hungarian army during the war with the Ottomans. However, it should be noted that the Serbs, despite the fact that they had their leader, still had large internal divisions. It was about the numerous princes and military leaders - dukes who opposed their leader. The princes formed the Council, which, as an authority, was often in conflict with Karadjordje.

However, although the revolt began as a mere movement against the arbitrariness of the Dahis, it quickly grew into a veritable uprising with higher goals. In fact, the developments on ground dictated that once the rebellion had begun, it was simply too difficult to turn things around. The Sultan, no matter how much he wanted to solve the problem peacefully, still could not ignore the Muslim character and element of the empire that demanded a strong, fast, and decisive confrontation with the Christian rebels who dared to kill Muslims in the Ottoman Empire. Any attempt at negotiation would have damaged the sultan's reputation. On the other hand, the sultan's authority was not particularly strong among the rebels, who hardly believed in his security guarantees if they laid down their arms. In fact, the revolt started because of the arbitrariness of the local authorities and the inability of the central government to maintain order. Hence, more or less, Sultan Selim was forced to send an army to suppress the Serbian rebels. It is this decision of the sultan that we consider crucial. This moment marked the character of the revolt as an uprising against the Ottomans, i.e., directly against the sultan and his armies. Until now, this

[10] Named after his black complexion (black Gjorge translated from Turkish); otherwise his real name is Djordje Petrovic.

could have been treated as a local rebellion of armed disgruntled villagers. The direct confrontation of the Serbian insurgents with the sultan's armies attracted the attention of the great powers, especially Russia and Austria-Hungary, from which the Serbian insurgents expected support. Russia intervenes directly in the war against the Ottomans (for other reasons) thus giving strong support to the Serbian insurgents who, in 1807, even endeavored to liberate the largest city in Serbia - Belgrade. With Russia's support, Serbian insurgents could already consider demands they could hardly have considered when the uprising began, such as a demand for an independent state. This change in the situation was seen by the sultan who now offers autonomy to the Belgrade pashalik, but within the Ottoman Empire. It seems that the influence from Russia and the support for the creation of an independent Serbian state were crucial for the rejection of this status. However, the situation soon changed dramatically, both within the empire and internationally. Within the Ottoman Empire, there was a change of the sultan who was assassinated. The new sultan was not in the mood for negotiations and wanted to prove himself in his new position. One of his first moves was to send a strong army to retake Belgrade in 1808. Serbian insurgents have been forced to flee where they started the uprising in Serbian forests and some of them across the Austro-Hungarian border[11]. However, this was not the end of the uprising. Internationally, in 1812, France invaded Russia and demanded for an immediate peace with the Ottomans, leaving the Serbian rebels in the lurch. After this great defeat of the Serbian insurgents, the sultan did not approve the request of the Serbian leaders for autonomy as offered by Sultan Selim. The uprising was brutally suppressed. Of course, this is an important lesson to be learned. The great powers will support you only as long as it is in their interest and they will not have any big moral problem to stop that support at the moment when it will be in their interest, regardless of the previously given promises. In fact, Russian support was inconsistent in the years before the French invasion of Russia, and the uprising in Serbia was used as a tool in their negotiating positions.

After the suppression of the First Serbian Uprising, the Ottomans regained full control of the Belgrade pashalik. In order to prevent future uprisings, they offered amnesty and the opportunity to return Serbian leaders as princes. However, it was not long before the Ottomans changed

[11] It is estimated that over 100,000 Serbs fled across the border.

their approach and began to become more and more paranoid, using cruel methods to interrogate villagers looking for hidden weapons and the likes. In order to intimidate the local Serb population and demonstrate strength, the Ottomans also carried out various mascaras. At the same time, there was an increase in the amount of fees. However, all this had the opposite effect on the Serbs. Hence, the announcements and speculations that Karadjordje, the leader of the First Serbian Uprising, planned is to return from exile in Russia. However, as stated earlier, not all princes were happy with this leader. Among them was Prince Milan, who was one of the fiercest critics of Karadjordj in the Council we wrote about above. However, Prince Milan was poisoned in mysterious circumstances. His half-brother, Milos Obrenovic, directly blamed Karadjordje for this. In fact, Milos was also a great critic of Karadjordje. The Ottomans took advantage of this internal division and appointed Milos as administrator for three districts, effectively giving him great power. As Milos, who was previously popular with the Serb population, power increased overtime, so did his popularity. At the same time, he improved his position with the central government in Istanbul when he handed over his head to the leader of the First Serbian Uprising, Karadjordje, and killed him when he returned to Serbia. With this move he achieved two goals, eliminated his opponent, and gained sympathy in Istanbul. Understandably, this step was not approved by the Serb population. The Ottoman terror practices continued. Milos knew that his policy of remaining loyal to the Ottomans would make him unpopular with the Serbs in the long run. In addition, there were reports that the central government was preparing a mass murder of Serbian princes. All this contributed to Milos turning from a loyal subject of the Ottomans into the leader of the Second Serbian Uprising.

Undoubtedly, Milos was a very intelligent character, and his actions were probably in accordance with certain advice from abroad. Thus, the official propaganda of the insurgents was a struggle for the equality of the Christian and Muslim populations. Captured Ottoman soldiers were not killed, and civilians were treated in the same manner. All this was part of the propaganda aimed primarily at the West (including Austria-Hungary), where Serbian insurgents gained great sympathy as opposed to the Ottoman Empire through press interviews. Internationally, however, the turmoil finally subsided with the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815. The previous moment finally left the Russians` hands free for another strong Russian interference. As a result of this, the sultan rushed to offer

autonomy to the Serbs in order to stop the uprising. This time, the rebels accepted the offer. A very important element of autonomy was the fact that it included the creation of a formal assembly. The second Serbian uprising ended in 1917. However, Russia had its own interests and this was the reason it went to war with the Ottoman Empire, and the fact that the Serbs and Ottomans reconciled played a very small role in their decision to wage a new war with the Ottomans in 1828. However, the Serbs benefited from this military conflict because in 1830, their autonomy was further strengthened and over time they were only nominally part of the Ottoman Empire. The great role of the intelligent Milos was reflected not only in the rejection of Ottoman rule (de facto), but also in the provision of "spiritual autonomy" where the Serbian church freed itself from Greek ecclesiastical domination. Previously, it was extremely important for the process of creating the Serbian nation. This is because it was followed by the creation of an educational curriculum in schools (originally within the churches) in which Serbian history was taught in Serbian and young people were educated in the Serbian spirit. From this it can be concluded that even the smallest partner in an asymmetric alliance can have a benefit, even directly due to other goals and opportunities of its great ally. For more on the internal and external conditions during the two Serbian uprisings, see Sowards (1996).

4.3. *Draft (Nachertanije)*

An extremely important figure in determining the general long-term directions of Serbian foreign policy was the leader of the constitutional party, Ilija Garashanin. In 1843 Aleksandar Karadjordjevic, the son of the famous Karadjordje, returned to power. Ilija Garashanin had been appointed Minister of Interior in his government. What is significant about Garashanin is not so much the fact that he was Minister of the Interior, but the secret memorandum sent to Prince Alexander in 1844 titled Draft – Nachertanije (draft)[12]. In this document, Garashanin projects the Serbian spheres of interest in the Balkans and, based on that, the future long-term action in order to create a relatively large and powerful state. Serbian law on the territories projected, according to Garashanin, was

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[12] The original document is fully available in Serbian language by Garashanin (2011). Ilija Garashaanin*: Начертаније*. [online] Нова српска политичка мисао. Available at: <http://www.nspm.rs/dokumenti/nacertanije.html> [Accessed 16 October 2020].

generally based on the historical heritage and glory of the medieval Serbian state. It is also based on the fact that some Serbs lived outside the Serbian state. This programmed Serbian expansionism will inevitably lead to further conflict with their southern neighbor - the Ottoman Empire, and in the longer term - the northern neighbor - Austria-Hungary. Subsequently, the Serbian vital interest was the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Montenegro, as well as all other parts of the Ottoman Empire, where, according to him, Serbs lived[13]. However, the projected Serbian territories did not end here, but extended over part of Ottoman Albania, more precisely its northern part, in order to provide a safe and direct exit to the Adriatic Sea. In this way, Serbia would be included in the landlocked countries. According to this vision, Serbia would grow from a small Belgrade pashalak several times in territory and population and would transform from a dependent landlocked state into a state with a sea in its borders, a powerful factor that could not be ignored in this part of Europe. Practically, all these territories, i.e., the territory of BiH, the northern parts of Albania, the part of Macedonia, etc. meant a policy directly directed against the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire (which included these territories), which is the same empire in which Serbia was once a part of. Achieving these goals requires a direct military conflict with an empire that was still militarily powerful and many times larger than Serbia. As stated earlier, the realization of these goals towards the Ottomans would be only a half success because the memorandum projected the Serbian territories in parts of Austria-Hungary such as Banat, Backa, Vojvodina, and even Slavonia and Dalmatia. That is, wherever, according to Garashanin, the South Slavs lived within this empire, he was also a little more careful in this part. As we have already said, this memorandum would later dictate the directions and goals of Serbian foreign policy, and it would also find its application in Serbian schools, etc. Understandably, the memorandum was kept as a top secret. This is more especially for the part of his intentions in relation to Austria-Hungary which should not be revealed at all before the successful completion of the projections in relation to the Ottoman Empire, in order for Serbia to avoid drawing the

[13] According to him, this included part of Ottoman Macedonia, where although it is indisputable that there was a Slavic Orthodox population. While Garashanin considered it to be of Serbian character, the other Slavic state – Bulgaria - considered it to be of Bulgarian character. Few people paid attention to the declaration of this Slavic population simply as Macedonian, different from both Serbian and Bulgarian.

two powerful empires against it at the same time. Thus, its existence would be directly endangered. Additionally, the Serbian projections regarding Austria-Hungary were particularly problematic due to the fact that Serbia at that time functioned as a kind of protectorate of the same and was in great (primarily economic) dependence. Hence, Garashanin saw Austria-Hungary as a longer-term enemy. In struggling to maintain its independence (both in relation to the Ottomans and in relation to the great Orthodox Slavic Russia) and in trying to strike a balance, Serbia actually found itself in a situation of long-term dependent position in relation to Austria-Hungary.

Thus, let us return to *Nachertanije*. As earlier stated, this document was kept in the strictest secrecy. Still its effects were visible primarily in schools and the curriculum that was taught in the subject History. In the beginning of 1880 in Serbia, there was already a consensus on the need to provide mass education, and not as in the previous practice, when it took place exclusively in the churches but in state public schools. In a decade, half of the male population had completed primary education, which was a quantum leap over the previous situation. The education was organized as free and completely controlled by the state. Understandably, the memorandum was translated into the school curriculum. The young Serbs learned about their oppressed homeland and their many compatriots – Serbs - who still do not have freedom. Practically, what would later become part of the new state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SCS) was presented in Serbian textbooks as Serbian countries. Even the formulation of South Slavic countries was rarely used. In this syllabus, besides the Serbian, the Slovenian and the Bulgarian were recognized as a separate South Slavic people. As for the Croats, however, they were simply identified as a Serb tribe of the Catholic faith. Regarding the Orthodox Macedonians, they were named as South Serbs. Since Bulgaria also claimed rights over the Macedonians, it was characterized as an enemy state. This way, young people imbued with a nationalist spirit were created, and they were ready to correct the historical injustice in the Serbian countries, both in the Ottoman and in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Of course, there were students who also came from BiH to receive education in Serbian. They all received the education that spoke of the glorious medieval Serbian state, the struggle for freedom, and all that intertwined with a lot of folklore and myth (Sowards, 1996).

Serbia aimed primarily at the territories of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. Serbia already had experience in fighting the Ottomans. However, it is one thing to fight in the Belgrade pashalik with the support of Russia (albeit erratic) in order to secure autonomy and perhaps independence at a time when the empire is facing more important threats to its security, and it is quite another thing to fight to, at the same time, defeat and seize its territory through the use of force. Let us not forget that the Ottoman Empire with all its weaknesses and problems was still one of the great powers with a powerful army. In addition, Serbian interests on the ground clashed with the interests and propaganda of other Balkan countries. So all this was quite economically exhausting. In order to compete with the aspirations of Bulgaria and Greece in Ottoman Macedonia, Serbia had to spend a lot of money on propaganda, build schools and the likes in order to create loyalty of the local Macedonian population. Later, this was not enough. Thus, Serbia financed the sending of armed detachments composed of Chetniks who acted as paramilitary formations in the territory of Ottoman Macedonia. In the meantime, Bulgaria became a completely independent state in 1908, which only strengthened its positions and claims to Macedonia. On the other hand, BiH was taken from the Ottomans and annexed to Austria-Hungary. This foreign policy situation was tragic for Serbia. On the one hand, a lot of money was invested in the realization of Nachertanije in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, and on the other hand, there was no result. In the example of BiH, quite the opposite happened; the hopes for the liberation of BiH from the Ottomans and the unification with Serbia were drastically dashed by its unification into the even stronger Austria-Hungary. Serbia felt betrayed and after this act, the hostility towards Austria-Hungary could no longer be hidden. This was quite understandable because a large number of Serbs lived in BiH, and Serbia worked on the ground against the Ottomans. Suddenly that fight, instead of giving the desired result, now had to be transformed into a fight against another empire. Relations between the two countries further strained during the First Balkan War, when Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum to Serbia demanding that Serbian troops should immediately withdraw from northern Ottoman Albania, threatening war. In this way, Austria-Hungary did not allow the realization of the Serbian plans for going to sea. In fact, the Austro-Hungarian red lines were set on their exclusive influence in the Western Balkans. So, instead of creating a landlocked Serbia, they preferred the creation of a formally independent

Albanian state, and in practice a kind of colony of Austria-Hungary. Due to this, Serbia compensated with territories from Macedonia, which in turn was interpreted as a hostile move by Bulgaria that started the Second Balkan War. Furthermore, we wrote about the Serbian-Austro-Hungarian relations in more detail in the following section.

Serbian-Austro-Hungarian Relations

After three centuries of Ottoman rule, Serbia gained autonomy after the end of the Second Uprising, which practically gradually expanded to become a formally and legally independent state in 1878. The first king of this country was King Milan, from the Obrenovikj Dynasty. Serbia was a small newly formed state that soon fell under full economic (and even political) dependence on its large neighbor - Austria-Hungary. Thus, during the time of the first Serbian king, Austria-Hungary became the largest buyer of Serbian agricultural products. Austro-Hungarian banks provided loans to Serbian businesses and practically owned the railways. This course towards Austria-Hungary did not make the Serbian king the most popular among the ordinary Serb population. In addition, the failed war with Bulgaria in his time was the reason for his even greater unpopularity. Therefore, among other reasons, he in 1889 relinquishes his place in favor of his son Alexander. However, Alexander soon inherited his father's unpopularity, both for running the country and for the image he had built in his private life. In 1903, there was also a military coup in which 26-year-old Alexander was killed. The military coup at the head of state was brought by King Peter, a member of the Karadjordje dynasty. Simply, at home, the curse of the divisions of the First and Second Serbian Uprisings continued. So, the struggles between the dynasties were happening on a daily basis. This moment, in addition to having internal implications in Serbia, also marked the beginning of a change in the course of Serbian foreign policy and the rapprochement with Russia at the expense of Austria-Hungary (Mutschlechner, 2020). What is interesting about King Peter, in addition to his pro-Russian views, is the fact that he was educated in France where he received the ideas for modernization of the country on a modern Western European scale. He also developed certain sympathies for France. At home, he advocated the transformation of the state into a constitutional monarchy, the introduction of certain democratic instruments, a modern economy and freedom of the media. Externally, over time he removed his dependence on Austria-Hungary at

the expense of cooperation with Russia, and even France, and was quite successful at doing so. All this made Serbia an example in the eyes of other Slavic peoples, and Serbia began to be increasingly perceived as the basic nucleus for the creation of the future free united states of all South Slavs. King Peter supported the concept of creating a supra-Slavic state on the Balkan Peninsula with Serbia as its heart.

Otherwise, in terms of party life, until the new constitution was obtained from the sultan (even before Serbia became independent), according to which the assembly gained more power, it was dominated by the constitutional party. However, with these changes, the decade-long rule of the constitutional party had come to an end at the expense of the Serbian Radical Party, which seemed like a real European refreshment in little Serbia. Thus, it promoted greater political participation of the population and followed the Western European ideas, protections. Also, a large part of its leadership was educated in Western Europe. In his rhetoric, socialism was often used in combination with strong and rather aggressive patriotism. Certain democratic currents also prevailed (although this was far from what we have today for democratic standards). It was under the leadership of this party that Serbia went to war with Austria-Hungary. The leader of the radical party was Nikola Pasic. What is interesting about him is that he was an activist for the Serbian cause in BiH, where he smuggled money for the anti-Ottoman uprising there. A second important element is that he was previously sent as Serbia's ambassador to Moscow (1890), where he probably embraced pan-Slavic ideas. Pasic became prime minister in 1903, which in turn marked a change in the course of Serbian foreign policy towards Austria-Hungary (Sowards, 1996).

Naturally, these policies were not greeted with admiration at the Vienna Palace. After the arrival of King Peter, not only political but also economic relations were disrupted since the beginning of the trade war. This trade war is significant due to the fact that Serbia was practically, completely, and economically dependent on the great Habsburg monarchy until then. We can say that through this way, on the one hand, Austria-Hungary helped Serbia as an independent state for many years, with the largest exports for Serbian pigs from the numerous Serbian meat farms being directed precisely to the monarchy. According to some estimates, over 85% of Serbian exports ended up in Austria-Hungary. Conversely, over 50% of imports to Serbia came from Austria-Hungary. As stated above, the Austro-Hungarian state considered that it had strong

instruments in its hands with which it could "discipline" King Petar and Prime Minister Pasic. Thus, Vienna did not hesitate to impose economic sanctions on Serbia. Austria-Hungary closed the borders for Serbian pigs, expecting that this move will bring small Serbia to its knees. Serbia, under Pasic, responded to the challenge by reorienting exports to France through the port of Thessaloniki, and to a lesser extent through Bulgaria and Romania. These events are known as the "pig war". Of course, this was less economically viable, but as part of other measures, it manages to dispel Austro-Hungarian dependence. Thus, Pasic invested in opening food processing factories so they could export canned meat, unlike the previous practice of exporting live meat. Additionally, relations between the two neighbors deteriorated when Serbia decided to buy new modern weapons for its army and received a loan from France. These developments indicated that Serbia has no intention of continuing to play the role of a small state dependent on its huge neighbor (Hannig, 2015).

Thus, Serbia's relations with Austria-Hungary were not the same all the time. They had their own evolution from great relationships to totally broken relationships and finally a direct war for total destruction. Even at a time when Serbia was only an autonomous province within the Ottoman Empire, there were some positive signals between the Monarchy and the future independent state. After the independence, Serbia gradually became a state completely dependent on its large neighbor. Even the proclamation of Serbia as a kingdom was supported by Austria-Hungary. In a bid to balance the possible Russian influence and also to have an ally as a security guarantee from the Ottoman Empire, in order to maintain its independence, it actually became completely dependent on Austria-Hungary. The Serbian independent state seemed to have had some wanderings in its foreign policy, which for many years oriented itself towards Austria-Hungary, and later reoriented towards Russia and even France (Mutschlechner, 2020). However, as relations between the two countries cooled, Serbia showed defiance and sought a way to regain independence from Austria-Hungary, first relying on Russia. For economic reasons and caution, Serbia tried to build strong ties with France as well. After this, Serbia never again fell under Austro-Hungarian influence[14].

We can say that after 1093, Serbia was already seen as an obstacle to the plans for Austria-Hungary's economic penetration of the Balkans. In

[14] With the exception of the military occupation during the First World War.

Austria-Hungary, they were aware that the processes of nationalism that had already emerged made it a fragile Empire. Serbia is seen as a problematic country that can foster these processes within the monarchy, and even a country that is able to jeopardize its security. Hence, various scenarios for the destruction or partition of Serbia are considered. At the very least, Serbia could continue to exist but be economically subjugated (Gabor, 2020). A good part of the military leadership openly advocated the destruction of Serbia at the first opportunity when there was a reason and some justification (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). On the other hand, in Serbia, Austria-Hungary was seen as a neighbor with expansionist imperialism that kept the Slavs in slavery who were determined to either have Serbia as their vassal or destroy it (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). However, it should be borne in mind that such attitudes did not come overnight and they gradually developed through various events. Such events included the trade stated above. The next significant event of this magnitude (and probably greater) was the crisis over the annexation of BiH in 1908, from Austria-Hungary, at the expense of the Ottoman Empire. The events of this crisis and its outcome would have substantial consequences on Austria-Hungary, its relations with Serbia, as well as its international position, and above all on its relations with Russia.

Serbia felt most affected by this gesture, despite the fact that BiH territory was taken from the Ottomans. It must be noted, however, that at the time of annexation, BiH was only nominally under the sultan's sovereignty. In practice, it was ruled and administered by Austria-Hungary. Hence, for many, this gesture of Austria-Hungary was a surprise and the need to formalize the factual situation was not seen. However, the Habsburg monarchy feared that with the introduction of the most important new constitution in the Ottoman Empire, BiH would be reintegrated under the sultan's sovereignty, and thus its de facto control would be lost. Therefore, the Habsburg monarchy believed that it had to act and exercise not only de facto but also de jure control over BiH. According to some authors, Austria-Hungary did this in a way that made it a complete diplomatic victory. The other major powers were not notified of the move and were practically taken aback (Urban, 2014). There was a partial exception with regard to Russia (and Germany). To be precise, the Austrian Foreign Minister informed the Russians about the plans for the annexation of BiH, asking for consent and support, and on this note, it offered support for Russia's aspirations in the Bosphorus. However, all this

was presented in the form of possible directions of thinking and perhaps building a certain common framework for future action, but on the ground, the Austro-Hungarian state acted immediately as if the Russians had already given them free hands and as a result Russia feel cheated. In Serbia, this act was experienced very tragically, even as a kind of declaration of war. As long as BiH was administered by Austria-Hungary but officially part of the Ottoman Empire, Serbian hopes were strong. The formal unification in 1908 was a terrible slap in the face for Serbia (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). In response to the Habsburg monarchy's determination to annex BiH, Serbia even mobilized its army for a possible war with Austria-Hungary. However, there was no war due to the lack of support from Russia for such a thing, and Russia itself withdrew from any military solution due to the clear position of Germany and the support it gave to Austria-Hungary regarding the annexation of BiH (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). However, Russia had decided to act diplomatically and was preparing to organize an international conference of the great powers on this issue. A key player in this conference should normally be the Ottoman Empire, which de jure had sovereignty over BiH. Also, Austro-Hungarian diplomacy prevented the Ottomans from participating through a financial compensation deal for the takeover of BiH. Hence, Russia's plans for an international conference failed, and in the absence of a response from the other major powers, Austria-Hungary successfully annexed the entire territory of BiH without military conflict. In order for this diplomatic victory to be complete, Austria-Hungary insisted on a practically politically isolated Serbia recognizing the legality of the annexation and promising to maintain good relations with the monarchy, and it did (Urban, 2014). However, this "dazzling" diplomatic victory came at a high price. Serbia saw the promise as a mere gesture, and Russia lost confidence in Austria-Hungary as a partner in future agreements. At the same time, Russia already feared for the future imperialist intentions of the Habsburgs towards the rest of the Balkans and was considering measures to maintain the balance of power. In addition, the other European powers were not overjoyed with the way all this was done, especially not at the moment of ignoring them.

The annexation of BiH caused serious upheavals in Austria-Hungary as well. The tensions that arose in the relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary (to some extent existed since the Pig War) were also reflected within the monarchy among a large South Slav population.

Furthermore, the South Slavic movement existed earlier within the monarchy. According to some historians as early as 1835, the Illyrian movement was formed in which it was believed that both Croats and Serbs could work together for their common benefit, something that would later become the basis for Yugoslavism (Desppalatović, 1975). Although the basis of South Slavic nationalism in the monarchy was basically Croatia, there were still initiatives such as the 1905 resolution (Istria on the Internet - History - World War I - The Fiume Question, 1905) adopted by Croat and Serb politicians demanding autonomy, language rights, etc., assuming that Croats and Serbs are practically similar if not one and the same people. Such action was not greeted with admiration in Vienna. All these tendencies were further strengthened by the deterioration of Serbian-Austro-Hungarian relations. The BiH poll dramatically increased the number of both Serbs and Croats in the monarchy, making their demands even more visible than before. The annexation of the new territory also sparked a dispute between the two parts of the dual monarchy over which part should govern BiH. In the end, a compromise solution was found for a kind of condominium administered by the joint foreign ministry, which only once again showed the complexity of the functioning of Austria-Hungary as a state (Mutschlechner, 2020).

On the one hand, Austria-Hungary was forced to act in order not to lose BiH. This was in line with their basic doctrine that in order to maintain the status of a great power, it must continue to expand its economic, political, and cultural influence where it can do so, and that was what the Balkan Peninsula had as its sphere of interest. This included occasional expansion with new territory (Urban, 2014). Subsequently, the annexation was a direct inclusion of new territory that emerged from the concept of simple expansion of influence. It was the recent expansion of the territory that resulted in an action by Russia that began working on the ground to form something which would later become known as the Balkan Alliance. Practically, the idea was to form a defense alliance composed of small Balkan states in order to stop the further possible expansionist policies of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans. On the part of Balkans, the interests of at least 4 of the great powers such as Austria-Hungary, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and Italy were already in conflict, and the Balkan countries were an additional factor (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). Soon, the new Balkan Alliance would become a factor and enter into the realization of its own expansionist goals in relation to the Ottoman Empire, starting the first

Balkan War (Urban, 2014). In it, Austria-Hungary was neutral, but interfered indirectly by practically threatening Serbia with war over which territories it could conquer and which territories it could not conquer from the Ottomans, who obviously were losing the war. This moment was one of the essential ones for the deepening disruption of the relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary. Described below is the Balkan Alliance, as well as the dilemmas and attitudes of Austria-Hungary regarding its own action towards the Balkan wars.

Thus, in relation to the Balkan Union, it can be said that we can probably trace its origins back to 1904 when the two regional powers Serbia and Bulgaria signed a friendship agreement, which was followed by intensified cooperation in the field of customs. This was an important moment because the two Slavic states entered into friendly relations (although they had a war behind them) in order to achieve a common interest. However, this agreement is much more important for our analysis because of its other effect. The Austro-Hungarian government saw this customs agreement as an attempt to undermine its economic interests and a further attempt by Serbia, which until then was completely dependent on it, for its autonomous economic policy. As stated earlier, Austria-Hungary responded vigorously with the trade embargo of 1906, which would later become known as the Pig War. Thus, on the one hand, the Friendship Agreement cost Serbia dearly due to the trade war, but on the other hand, it contributed to Serbia's economic and later political independence. However, this was not the essence of the agreement between Serbia and Bulgaria. What greatly affected both countries was the inevitable collapse of the Ottomans and the division of their territory. However, the agreement did not provide detailed solutions for what that division would look like, but only formed a framework for alliance and identified disputed and undisputed territories that were yet to be resolved in detail. According to some authors, Serbia and Bulgaria entered the formation of the future alliance without the support of the great powers (Urban, 2014). However, this is not entirely true because the creation of the later official Balkan Alliance of Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro[15] was largely supported and encouraged by Russia, despite the fact that Russia's imagined goals were quite different from the Balkan Alliance in practice

[15] Montenegro also joined the Balkan Union, for which it is interesting to mention that it talked about it with Bulgaria, and not as an example with Serbia (Urban, 2014).

and on the field. Subsequently, Russia aimed to create an alliance that would essentially maintain a balance of power against Austria-Hungary. It is true that the idea of such an alliance was not new, but Russian diplomacy supported it only after the Austro-Hungarian annexation of BiH. Thus, the treaty for the Balkan Alliance was signed in March 1912. The treaty was generally formulated to provide for a defense alliance, but there were sections that stated that its members would act together if a European power decided to occupy portion of the European part of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the agreement had a secret annex that was far more aggressive. This part talked about the division of the territories ruled by the Ottomans. A joint administration of territories for which no common language could be found was envisaged, including arbitration by the Russian tsar in the event of a dispute[16]. It is an interesting fact that part of the conversations between the King of Montenegro Nicholas and the Bulgarian King Ferdinand took place in the guest room of the emperor in Hofburg without the Austrian intelligence having any idea about it (Urban, 2014). It generally seemed that the intelligence of the monarchy was weak in the direction of revealing the Balkan alliance and its true intentions. According to Urban, the monarchy was not familiar with the Serbo-Bulgarian agreement until May 1912, when the information was then given to them by their German allies (Urban, 2014). According to Sked, Berlin informed its allies even before the First Balkan War (Sked, 2014). Russia's subsequent moves have suggested that the action of the Balkan Union went beyond the projections and goals of its creator - Russia. Russia's interest was proclaimed similar to that of the Austro-Hungarians, and that was to maintain the status quo in the Ottoman Empire. Obviously, the Balkan Alliance had the capacity to change the status quo. In addition, Bulgaria became quite powerful with ambitions, even for the capital of the Ottoman Empire - Istanbul. Previously, it directly endangered the Russian aspirations to control this city. Probably because of all this, on the eve of the First Balkan War, Russia tried to dissuade the member states of the Balkan Alliance from starting a war with the Ottoman Empire (Urban, 2014). Previously, it was in line with the Austro-Hungarian interests, and at the same time, after the short diplomatic action of Russia, it turned out that the other European powers had the green light for that. That was why

[16] The territory of today's Republic of Macedonia was disputable above all. The idea of a free autonomous and all of Macedonia was set aside because of the interests of Serbia and Bulgaria.

Russia, together with Austria-Hungary on October 8, 1912, sent a telegram to the governments of the member states of the Balkan Union. The telegram urges for the peaceful settlement of disputes and explicitly states that any change of borders imposed by force will not be recognized (Urban, 2014).

However, we express a little skepticism in all this. Austria-Hungary and Russia were the most important players on the Balkan Peninsula. If their interest was to preserve the status quo, and in addition that interest was the same for at least one other European power that was directly affected - the Ottoman Empire, then it is really unlikely that the small Balkan states still decided quite autonomously to wage war against the interests of these three European powers. Additionally, given the closeness of Bulgaria[17], and later Serbia with Russia, everything really did not seem likely before. However, one can only speculate that a new balance of power was agreed upon, with no European power directly benefiting from a territorial benefit while the Balkan states would have a direct territorial benefit, but in a way that it would not make any of them too big and too powerful compared to others. In fact, this in a way confirms the position of Austria-Hungary that it will have to tolerate some enlargement of Serbia as part of the Balkan Alliance and not to interfere because there was no consensus from the major powers for possible intervention (Gabor, 2020). Previously, it does not return to the assumption that a certain consensus between the great powers still existed, that none of them should interfere directly, and that the Balkan states would increase their territory proportionally in order to maintain the balance of power between them.

However, the First Balkan War began between the Balkan Alliance coalition against the Ottoman Empire, and the other major powers remained neutral. The Balkan states achieved a dazzling victory over their former hegemon who was forced to organize a defense, even over its capital. However, after a short truce, the member states of the Balkan coalition began to fight themselves, starting the Second Balkan War. The main reason was the dissatisfaction of Bulgaria over the division of Macedonia[18]. Serbia welcomed the end of the Second Balkan War as an absolute winner against both the Ottomans and Bulgaria, doubling its

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[17] Thus, Bulgaria's closeness to Russia was the main reason why Germany was very hesitant about the Austro-Hungarian alliance proposals with Bulgaria (Sked, 2014).

[18] For more on the Balkan wars viewed through the prism of a security dilemma, see Marolov and Stojanovski (Marolov & Stojanovski, 2015).

territory and increasing its population by over 1,500,000 (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017).

This outcome was not the preferred option for Austria-Hungary. On the other hand, the First Balkan War was a partial success for the Habsburg monarchy, which did not allow Serbia to go to the Adriatic Sea and ensure the creation of an Albanian state. Serbia's eventual breakthrough on the Adriatic could mean permission to build a Russian military and naval base on the Adriatic. It was this argument that was crucial for gaining support from the other great powers for the creation of an Albanian state. That Austria-Hungary was serious about not allowing Serbia to cross the Adriatic at any cost is evidenced by the fact that although neutral, it mobilized its army four times during the Balkan wars and threatened war with Serbia (Gabbor, 2020). This was in line with the established sphere of interest for Austria-Hungary in the event of a possible scenario for the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in its European part. Consequently, Austria-Hungary projected its interests in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula. Its interest was primarily economic. So accordingly, this strategy envisaged full cooperation with other Balkan countries (which in translation would mean some of their economic subordination) which included the right to full free access to the port of Thessaloniki (Sked, 2014). Most especially in the Western Balkans, it could not be allowed to fall under another European power, such as Italy, nor did it want to see it as part of the newly formed Balkan states. This was especially true for Serbia, which had certain pretensions towards the Adriatic. One can conclude that the monarchy was aimed at maintaining the status quo, but when it realized that the Ottoman Empire would not be able to maintain its position in the Balkan wars, it clearly advocated the creation of a new state in the Western Balkans - Albania - under its influence and would stop Serb (and Montenegrin) incursions into the Adriatic region. Otherwise, the creation of Albania was seen as a kind of colony (Gabor, 2020). In this way, Serbia would be left landlocked and probably after some time, more or less, dependent on Austria-Hungary again.

Even before the start of the Balkan wars, when the situation in the Ottoman Empire had already escalated through the uprising in Albania and the situation in Libya, i.e., the Italian-Turkish war, it became clear that the Balkan Alliance had the potential to change the status quo in the Balkans. As a result of this opportunity, the Council of Ministers met in

Vienna on September 14, 1912. The Council discussed the future course of action of Austria-Hungary in the new situation. There were generally two options (Urban, 2014). The first, which was in fact accepted, and used with diplomatic instruments, advocated the initiation of an international conference of the great powers in order to put pressure on the Balkan Alliance not to start a war. This position was supported by the emperor, Foreign Minister Franz Ferdinand (Sked, 2014). The second option was far more belligerent, and it was mainly advocated by military officials. According to this option, Austria-Hungary would have a clear position on Serbia in the form of an ultimatum by which, if Serbian troops cross the border into the Ottoman Empire, then the monarchy forces retain the former to act in the way they deem most appropriate. This option was far more risky because it hid the danger of escalating Balkan wars and a possible war with Russia (Urban, 2014). Additionally in such a situation, the intervention of Italy would also be quite possible. Hence, one can speculate that the choice of the second option for action would only accelerate the process of starting the First World War. In addition, a clear provocation by Serbia was needed in order to justify this Austro-Hungarian involvement (Gabror, 2020). Hence, when the first option prevailed, it was realized in a slightly different way than imagined, by sending a diplomatic note to the governments of the Balkan countries, together with Russia. Unfortunately, in Austria-Hungary (normally also in the Ottoman Empire), it did not have any significant effect on the Balkan states that were determined to go to war. This attitude of the monarchy practically meant a relatively passive policy and a simple observation of the course of hostilities. The reasons were simply that Austria-Hungary had no further territorial goals in the Balkans, but external factors were taken into account, such as the lack of clear support from Germany, and at the same time the danger of Russian direct interference. An additional headache for Austria-Hungary was the positions of Italy, which insisted that if the monarchy achieved some territorial expansion, then they would also seek certain compensations for themselves (Sked, 2014). However, it should be emphasized that this direction of action of the Habsburg monarchy, no matter how passive, is still a partial feature. As we have mentioned many times, Austria-Hungary was determined to prevent Serbia from entering the Adriatic Sea. It was this Austro-Hungarian policy that caused a series of events. Thus, Serbia remained dissatisfied with the inability to reach the Adriatic Sea, so it considered that it had the right to

compensation with the conquered Macedonian territory, which in turn was a reason for Bulgaria to declare war on the Serbs and the Balkans to find itself in the Second Balkan War. As it is known, Bulgaria lost the Second Balkan War. This begs the question: why did Austria-Hungary not intervene on Bulgaria's side and thus change the course of events? Although there may be more answers to this question, they undoubtedly move within the framework that the monarchy acted a little confusingly and indecisively, and seemed to be caught up in the whole situation. Additionally, Romania's entry into the Second Balkan War, practically on the Serbian side, complicated matters because Austria-Hungary was building alliance relations with Romania. The monarchy tried to balance between the two countries it considered allies, namely Bulgaria and Romania, and did not give clear support to either of them. In the end, neither Bulgaria nor Romania was satisfied with the role of Austria-Hungary. Also an important argument that must be taken into account was the position of Germany which was against any direct intervention in favor of Bulgaria (Sked, 2014). The indirect effect of the overall action of Austria-Hungary was against its ally, Bulgaria. Hence, this is because of the threat to Serbia to withdraw from the Adriatic (because of which Serbia demanded territorial compensations in Macedonia), and because of the annexation of BiH from before (because of which they simply redirected the Serbian aspirations to the south). The end result of this was a more powerful Serbia. Although it had a large territorial expansion that Austria-Hungary did not dispute (and to some extent allowed with its neutrality), their relations further deteriorated as Serbia now directly blamed the monarchy for that.

Hence, one can conclude that during the crisis with BiH, the monarchy was quite decisive while during the Balkan wars, it was less hesitant. It seems that it received it unprepared. Two options have emerged as possible courses of action. Both of them hid a certain risk that we have already written about above. However, the choice of a policy of neutral status in the Balkan wars could have been almost reversed if Serbia had not relinquished its Ottoman-occupied territories in northern Albania. In relation to Romania and Bulgaria, to some extent there is a certain rivalry between them for them to become too powerful. However, the policy of balancing between them has proven to be unpopular (Sked, 2014).

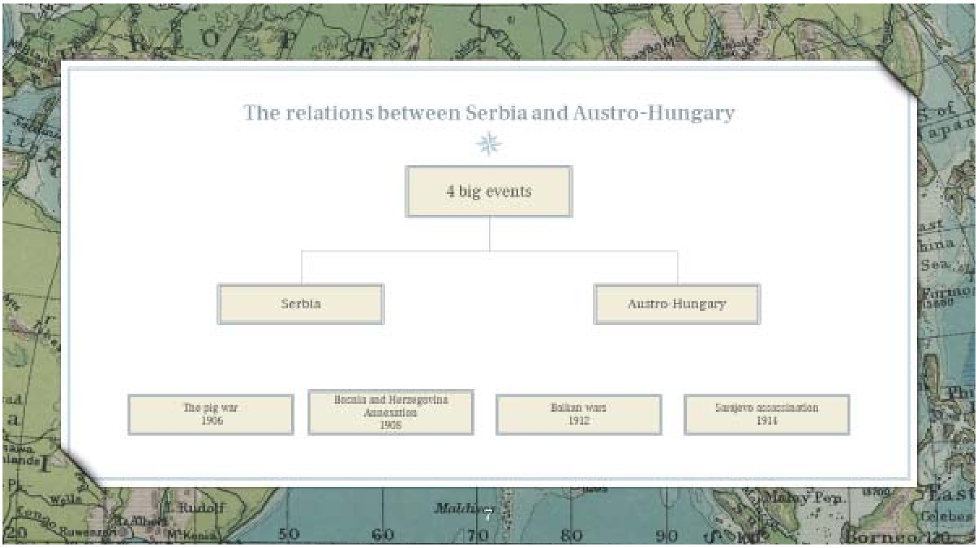
On the other hand, one can conclude that Serbia as a state and especially the Serbian army came out of all these events with great

experience. They already had behind them a lost war with Bulgaria in 1885, two Balkan wars, but were successful against the Ottomans and a rematch with Bulgaria. It should be noted that there was some connection with Austria-Hungary and the Serbian army. Furthermore, many of its leaders received their education in Austria-Hungary at a time when Serbia was only a dependent state in the arms of its great neighbor. For example, the head of the Serbian army was educated in an Austrian military school. It is interesting that most of the officers in the Serbian army were essentially ordinary villagers and brothers with arms. This is because in Serbia, there was almost no class division (Trevelyan, 2013). The Serbian army had relatively powerful artillery. It was regularly supplied with food and ammunition. However, by Western standards, it was considered that it was rather miserably equipped and dressed and without adequate health support (Trevelyan, 2013). On the other hand, due to the military successes, the Serbs felt victorious because they were able to defeat the powerful Ottoman Empire, and additionally defeated the powerful Bulgaria, which wanted to challenge some of their military booty in Macedonia. However, the fact remained that BiH was still further away from Serbia due to the annexation by Austria-Hungary. Otherwise, according to the situation on ground, Serbia entered and left alliances even with countries that it considered hostile, such as Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire (with which it indirectly cooperated in the war against Bulgaria during the Second Balkan War). However, the definitive collapse of the Ottoman Empire in its European part encouraged the Serbs that the same scenario was possible in Austria-Hungary, and many began to see this multinational empire as the second sick man (Sked, 2014). If analysis is made, one can see that Serbia was built on a completely opposite concept from Austria-Hungary. Also, Austria-Hungary was a mix of peoples, languages, and religions in contrast to Serbia's concept of a homogeneous nation - a state created by Orthodox Serbs (Urban, 2014)[19]. The fear of the Habsburg monarchy was the prevalence of this concept and the disintegration of the monarchy along internal ethnic lines, normally all this was aided by the external forces. This, therefore, is a process that would end with the creation of numerous

[19] However, we are talking about different concepts and that does not mean that Serbia was homogeneous because Macedonians, Bulgarians, Roma, Turks, Vlachs, etc. lived within its borders.

small states in its place or its division. After all, what happened to the Ottoman Empire was a good warning (Trevelyan, 2013).

We can conclude that the relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary started as excellent relations. Austria-Hungary supported the small Serbia, but it all came at a price, making Serbia completely dependent on its large neighbor. Serbia's quest for true independence had worsened relations with Austria-Hungary. They had a constant downward trend in the events that followed, and we singled out the pig war, the annexation of BiH, and finally the Balkan wars as key. Of course, the event that caused the biggest shock was the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince in Sarajevo, which was stated below. After the end of the Balkan wars, one thing was certain: The Ottoman Empire was no longer a danger to Serbia, which now had no common border with it. The military victories boosted the self-confidence of Serbs who wanted to redress the injustice they believed was done to them with the annexation of BiH. On the other hand, Austria-Hungary increasingly feared the existence of an independent Serbia.



The Assassination

There were several moments that further deteriorated relations between neighboring Austria-Hungary and Serbia. As such, we single out the trade war, the annexation of BiH, and the Balkan wars. Undoubtedly, one of the biggest reasons for the breakdown in relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia was the annexation of BiH (regardless of the purely

formal nature of that act). This was simply experienced very emotionally by the Serbs who had been working for years to liberate BiH from the Ottoman Empire. Probably the most emotional part of what was labeled as Serbian countries was that Orthodox Serbs lived there without any restrictions[20]. However, a key moment for the breakdown of relations was the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince in Sarajevo. Hence, this led to the question of who committed the assassination and what was the role (guilt) of the Serbian state in all this?

Undoubtedly, there were secret Serbian associations in BiH that worked for its liberation from the Ottomans. Specifically, several Pan-Slavic nationalist groups existed and operated in BiH. They grew and strengthened after the cooling of the relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. They were mainly made up of young students and radicals who saw themselves as freedom fighters against tyranny. They enjoyed the sympathy of the Serb population and had some support from some of the military officers in Serbia. Interestingly, they often advocated and agitated against both the Habsburg monarchy and the Serbian state leadership, which they considered incapable of adequately opposing Austro-Hungarian positions and interests (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2017). After the annexation of BiH, some of these associations continued their struggle and new ones were established, but what was crucial now was that they had to transform their struggle against the Habsburgs. One of the most important of these associations was "Young Bosnia", formed in 1911. Another notable association was Unification or Death, popularly known as the Black Hand. It was formed in 1910. One of the founders of this association is Apish, who later became the first man of the Serbian military intelligence after 1913. The National Defense Association, founded in 1908, also functioned in BiH which worked primarily on the ground in Ottoman Macedonia, mainly by sending its own armed detachments. Over time, the "Black Hand" became so strong that even Pasic's ruling radical party feared it.

That is why we believe that Serbia was probably partly to be blamed indirectly because of the overall atmosphere created by the propaganda and were less direct; not because of its government or king, but because of the independent operation of part of the Apish-controlled army and military intelligence. Otherwise, the rivalry between the official

[20] Unlike, for example, Macedonians, who were called South Serbs, or Croats, who were considered Catholic Serbs.

actions of the government and the "renegade" Apish was seen in the internal struggle for supremacy in terms of governing the state, especially in relation to the newly conquered territories in the south. It is important to understand and clarify beforehand why after the assassination, official Vienna immediately pointed the finger of blame directly at the Serbian government, which in many cases was not true. Firstly, the assassination was carried out by Austro-Hungarians, not citizens of Serbia. Secondly, there was no evidence that this was carried out on the orders of the Serbian government. Thirdly, the only connection that could be transferred to Serbia is Apish, who in turn, was in conflict with the central authorities in Belgrade, for which he would later be sentenced to death in a trial in which he was accused of betraying the Serbian king. However, to be completely objective, there were undoubtedly security reports that a possible assassination was being planned. These reports also reached Pasic. Although Pasic later denied any information about the assassination plot, there is evidence that he not only knew but also informed his ambassador in Vienna, who was given the task of discreetly informing the authorities about it. However, it is believed that the ambassador was even too discreet and used diplomatic vocabulary that the authorities failed to read in between the lines. Among other things, the ambassador stressed that the planned visit and parade to Sarajevo scheduled for June 28 was a terribly bad date, as it could be seen as a direct provocation to Serbs (the day of the Kosovo battle engraved in the minds of Serbs) (Sowards, 1997). However, this very well-intentioned indication could easily be interpreted as a kind of threat to Vienna and a kind of interference in internal affairs, telling them when they can and when they cannot organize a visit and parade in a city in their own country. However, although Pasic later denied all this (and of course for reasons in front of the Serbian public), it was this move of a kind of co-operation with the authorities in Vienna that distinguished between the Serbian official government policy on the one hand and the action of renegade military intelligence on the other.

Regarding the direct perpetrators of the assassination, however, it is indisputable that the Habsburg police acted quickly. All participants were arrested and confessed to the crime. However, what is crucial for determining Serbia's guilt is the question of whether there is a clear connection between them and the Serbian state. The assassination was carried out by high school students, probably assisted by the "Black Hand", but still guided by their own motives and beliefs. Franz Ferdinand's visit

was conceived as a kind of parade among the masses. He was driving with his wife in an open car that was moving slowly in order to make visual contact with the masses. The famous assassin, Gavrilo Princip, was just one of the conspirators that day. It was a large group of young people from BiH deployed along the route that Ferdinand was to take. Mehmed Mehmedbasic was among them. Obviously from the name, it is not about an Orthodox Serb but a Muslim from Bosnia. Besides him, there were six others of whom the 19-year-old Princip was the last. Vaso Chubrilovic, a 17-year-old boy who actually tried to carry out the assassination by dropping a failed bomb, was deployed in the third position. After this attempt, the prince's car did not move on the planned course and was intercepted coincidentally by Gavrilo Princip which resulted to the prince’s assassination. The assassination was used as a reason to declare war.

Nonetheless, the logical question is: what were the goals they wanted to achieve with it? As earlier stated, the direct perpetrators were arrested and did not deny the crime. During the trial, they did not invoke any Serbian or Croatian ideas or national feelings, and in fact there was a Muslim among them. They all said that with the act, they had the idea to symbolically send a message against the Habsburg rule with BiH. In addition, what they all had in common was the fact that they were young people protesting. Their idea was not that their act could lead to a war with Serbia. In fact, the war was desired by Austria-Hungary, so the previous claim can be believed. The theories that Serbia wanted a war are not the most sustainable because in those moments, Serbia was not the most prepared for war. Furthermore, the administration in the recently occupied Vardar Macedonia was not well organized and the Serbian army had just emerged from the two hard and cruel Balkan wars. However, on the other hand, while the First World War in 1914 was the end of a relatively long period of peace in Europe, for Serbia it was a simple continuation of the Balkan wars.

Additionally, the understanding that during this period the assassinations were more or less normal and were not rare at all should be taken into account. As it will be shown later, the assassins wanted to send a message by killing a representative of the monarchy, and the nuances decided that it was Franz Ferdinand. As a matter of fact, Bosnian youth had acted before. Thus, for instance, Bogdan Zerajic tried unsuccessfully to assassinate the Austrian Governor of Bosnia in 1910. However symbolic the assassination was, it still had a strong message in it. Franz Ferdinand was

not just anyone but the Austrian heir to the throne. His assassination in BiH sent the message that Austria-Hungary had no future there because its future was killed that day in the person of Ferdinand. However, we believe that the theory that the Serbian side wanted to provoke a war with the assassination does not really have many arguments for the reasons we have explained above. On the other hand, there is a theory that Ferdinand's assassination actually had much longer-term goals, which consisted, above all, in the possible future rearrangement of the monarchy. Ferdinand was the bearer of a rather liberal idea. He advocated the transformation of the dual monarchy into a trilateral monarchy, where, in addition to the Austrians and Hungarians, the Slavic population would be a constituent and equal part[21]. Such ideas of Ferdinand were not welcomed by the Hungarian part of the monarchy, who thought that through this way, the balance within the country would be disturbed at their own expense. On the other hand, these ideas may not have been welcomed most favorably by certain circles in Serbia, as obtaining such a favorable status for the South Slav population within the monarchy could have deterred the Serbs from realizing their intentions for unification with BiH, and so on. Based on the above, two directions of thinking are also possible. According to the first, the assassination was in fact at the request of the Hungarian court. According to the second, it was "ordered" by certain circles in Serbia. Those particular circles came down to Apish and military intelligence. For the first theory there is no serious evidence, while for the second, certain actions of the Apish go in that direction. Thus, this still does not confirm the theory that he acted for that purpose, much less certain that he wanted to provoke a war. It is possible that he acted and gained additional sympathy from the Serbian people, in order to strengthen his own positions in the conflict with the Serbian king. Thus, Gavrilo Princip was known to have come from Belgrade in 1914. He also carried weapons that he could hardly carry without the help of certain structures, such as military intelligence. At the same time, Princip knew the exact date of the visit and the exact route of movement planned for Franz Ferdinand. Of course, everything before indicates that Princip had the help of intelligence. This does not mean that the assassination was deliberate and planned in

[21] On the other hand, Ferdinand was one of the biggest supporters of the option of war against Serbia during the Balkan wars (Sked, 2014).

Belgrade. As earlier stated, Bosnian organizations acted quite independently, but that does not mean that military intelligence was infiltrated and did not provide logistics. It is alleged that the original ideas of the Bosnian assassins to assassinate the Governor of Bosnia or even the Emperor Franz Josef may have been redirected to the Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand under the influence of Apish. Hence, by all logic, Apish did not believe that assassination could provoke a war, and if he really wanted a war, he would help the young Bosnians assassinate the Bosnian governor or even the emperor, which would be a far more certain cause of war (Sowards, 1997).

5. The Austro-Hungarian Side

The assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo was used as a reason to start a great war. However, the fact that Austria-Hungary did not react immediately, but waited for almost two months, tells us that its decision to declare war was not reckless and was not a spontaneous reaction to revenge against Serbia. Austro-Hungarian diplomacy sold this fact as an attempt to resolve the situation peacefully through diplomatic instruments instead of immediately starting a war, which in principle was not the case because they identified the culprit in advance and convicted him (Gabor, 2020). The fact of the assassination, no matter how politically problematic it was, was not the main reason for the war. However, the reason for starting a war with Serbia was only sought and it was found in this act. Purely for illustration, Empress Elizabeth was assassinated in 1898 in Switzerland by an Italian, so this was not an occasion for Austro-Hungarian war with Switzerland or Italy.

Nevertheless, let us return for a moment to the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy. It was a rather complicated creation in which decisions were made in an equally complicated way. It was headed by the emperor of the Habsburg dynasty who was the joint body for the two constituent parts of the monarchy. In addition to him, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the factions of the two constituent parts of the monarchy, and the army also participated in the decision-making process. The situation in these relations was far from that in Serbia, where part of the army practically acted autonomously under the command of military intelligence. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was Leopold Berchtold. It is interesting to know that he came to the position in 1912 after completing his service as an ambassador to Russia. He was the youngest foreign

minister in Europe. He is considered not to have had much knowledge of Balkan affairs (Sked, 2014). By the way, the emperor Franz Josef, who was most responsible for foreign policy, almost delegated his responsibility to his foreign minister in the period before the First World War. For illustration, in the three years before World War I, the emperor did not attend any of the 39 meetings of the Council of Ministers (Sked, 2014).

The assassination in Sarajevo caused great controversy within the monarchy, both for the lapses and for the next steps. It was stated that a mass investigation was followed with an arrest. As earlier stated, practically all the perpetrators were found and convicted. Despite the fact that these were executors (citizens of the monarchy) which was still in almost all discussions, the finger pointed at Serbia. The connection to such allegations was the investigation which showed that the weapons or part of them came from Serbia. This was not an in-depth analysis to see if the Government of Serbia was really behind this act, but simply pointed the finger directly at the Government of Pasic. Even if someone tried to make a more realistic assessment of the activities of various associations in BiH, it was not done too deeply and as such the National Defense Association was accused (otherwise an organization that operated much more in Vardar Macedonia than in BiH). Probably all this was not so essential. What was essential was the determination for a war against Serbia, for which only a good occasion was awaited. In addition, full and unequivocal support was provided by Germany. We can say that on this issue, Austria-Hungary received a kind of blank check from its ally Germany. The German Kaiser wrote that he "remains loyal to Austria-Hungary in accordance with the obligations of the treaty and the old friendship" (Amt, 2014, p.1). More or less everyone was in similar positions with the generals being even fiercer. The only one who was a kind of opposition to these views and against military action against Serbia was the Hungarian Prime Minister, Stefan Tisa. In his mind, even the most positive scenario (rapid defeat of Serbia) was not a desirable scenario. Simply by annexing Serbia to the monarchy, the number of Slavs will increase dramatically. He feared that this expansionist policy would eventually return to them like a boomerang, with Hungarians becoming a minority in their own country. Such a scenario would sooner or later lead the monarchy to trilogy by giving equal status to the Slavic population, which would significantly reduce Hungary's position. Hence, he was actually an opponent of the heir to the throne Ferdinand, who again advocated for such a solution, and ironically

was killed by a Serb, which in turn will be the cause of war against Serbia. In his letter to the emperor on July 1, he says that going to war with Serbia would be a fatal mistake at the worst moment, he believes that they have no support for Romania, and Bulgaria is too weak and, in fact, there is no clear evidence that Serbia is behind the assassination (Gabor, 2020; Sked, 2014). However, under the pressure of the whole atmosphere in the monarchy, the prime minister simply had to partially retaliate from these views. For example, the entire Austrian Council of Ministers sided with the war on 7 July. So there were no dilemmas for the Austrian part of the monarchy. The dilemmas existed among some Hungarians. In order to find some sort of compromise with Tisa's views, the Council nevertheless agreed not to declare war on Serbia immediately, but to first issue an ultimatum with demands and thus gave a glimmer of hope that the war would be avoided. However, it was more than clear that all this was a dead letter on paper, and in practice the requirements were so difficult, and the response time after the ultimatum was very short and it was formulated in such a way that Serbia was only expected to reject it (because it was formulated to be rejected by any state) with premature demands that violated, humiliated, and undermined Serbian sovereignty. Practically the ultimatum was sent in order to be rejected (Amt, 2014).

Nevertheless, Tisa had to agree to this "compromise", called a 48-hour ultimatum, which was handed over to Belgrade on July 23rd. Tica, who really did not have much room for maneuver, agreed with the former, but sought a clearly proclaimed position on the aims of the war. Hence, he demanded that it be clear that the war was not a war for territory and that the defeated Serbia will not cling to Austria-Hungary. He managed to impose his position by justifying it by saying that it could provoke sympathy and understanding between European powers, and could even take away Russia's reasons for interference. At least, some border corrections could be expected, and Serbia would at best be spin-off of satellite-state status (Gabor, 2020). More or less, such scenarios included the gradual colonization of Serbia through the settlement of Hungarian and Austrian farmers, and some border changes would be made by Montenegro, especially in the part of the Adriatic coast at the expense of Albania (Sked, 2014).

However, Serbia's response was rather unexpected. It accepted almost everything stated in the ultimatum, except for one point (which referred to the right of the Austro-Hungarian authorities to conduct

investigations on the territory of Serbia) and what it refused, which the country was ready to discuss further in order to find a solution (Amt, 2014). The position of the emperor in this context is also interesting. He was already in his advanced years and demanded revenge for the assassination in Sarajevo. However, after receiving the answer from Serbia, he commented that he no longer sees a reason for war (Amt, 2014), but obviously things had already gone too far, because it seemed that this was the ideal opportunity to find a reason for war with Serbia that they had been waiting for so long and this war was seen as an inevitable act even before the assassination (Gabor, 2020). Williamson is of the same opinion, according to which the assassination was a good enough reason and opportunity to finally subjugate Serbia (Williamson, 2007). According to the understanding of part of the Austro-Hungarian leadership, especially its military part, Austria-Hungary was already in a war practically started by Serbia. This war was inevitable for them and could only be postponed for a few years, probably with worse conditions for Austria-Hungary. Certainly there was a fear of an Ottoman scenario if Austria-Hungary did not enter into a decisive war with Serbia (Sekd, 2014). Although the war in 1914 was marked as self-defense by Austria-Hungary, it was in fact a preventive war according to their conceptions. In fact, for them it was a war for the survival of the dual monarchy (Gabor 2020). For instance, *General Franz Konrad von Hezendorf* spoke publicly about the need for a pre-emptive war and a settlement with Serbia. General Franz claimed that the monarchy was surrounded by enemy states, so it was much better to go to war with them one by one. Thus, according to him, this was a good moment for an attack on small Serbia, which was already weakened by the Balkan wars, and in terms of possible Russian support, he thought that it would not happen because of the support that Austria-Hungary enjoyed from Germany. Such a foreign policy will have an impact as well. Thus, Serbia's military defeat was a demonstration of power and a defeat of the Slavs' hopes inside Austria-Hungary. Hence, this foreign policy was a kind of tool for neutralizing problems at home (Mutschlechner, 2020). According to Sked, there are two different explanations for the main reason for deciding to go to war in 1914. According to the first, it was the inability to federally reorganize the state; hence there was a need to go to war to prevent national issues from destroying the Austro-Hungarian state from within. The second explanation claims that the decision for war was made because of the dynasty's international prestige. In fact, the very decision of

war could not have been made without the explicit consent of the emperor (Sked, 2014).

However, we should point out that there are authors who believe that the situation was reversed. That is, Austria-Hungary did not want the war but it was desired by Serbia. Such an attitude, for instance, is for Hannig, who blames Serbia for their indisputable desire for part of Austro-Hungarian territory. According to her, the position of the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister that the monarchy has an irreconcilable situation with its neighbor Serbia, because it has expansionist intentions towards territories that are part of his country, is quite understandable (Hannig, 2015). However, this very argument can be interpreted reversely. That is, we can say that again Austria-Hungary wanted the war, because it considered it inevitable due to the existence and operation of the Serbian state. At the very least, if it did not want it then, it perceived it as inevitable. Hence, the calculations of the monarchy were that in a possible war with little Serbia they would be a certain winner, and the possibility of Russian interference would be neutralized due to German support for this action. In fact, such a situation already existed during the annexation of BiH, where Serbia did not dare to react due to the vague support from Russia, which in turn retaliated due to the clear German position on this issue. In this analysis, it was pointed out that there are opinions, according to which Germany is actually to blame for the war, without whose blank check Austria-Hungary would not have dared to declare war on Serbia. According to others, the blame for starting the war lies primarily with Russia, and partly with France. Russia was determined to respond militarily to the situation, even before Serbia was given the opportunity to respond to the ultimatum, while France knew about it all the time (Sked, 2014). In addition to the above, the military capacities are also emphasized. Thus, it is estimated that Germany, together with Austria-Hungary, had at its disposal some 3.5 million troops as opposed to the 5 million cumulative armies from Russia, France, and Serbia (Sked, 2014). In our view, the war was in fact the product of more circumstances than just the desire of one state or another, although it is quite indisputable that Austria-Hungary wanted a military solution or at least sees it as inevitable at the very least.

6. Serbia vs. Austria-Hungary and the Prisoner Dilemma

The threat from Austria-Hungary and the choices that Serbia had at its disposal and decided on can also be analyzed through the use of the theoretical framework of the prisoner dilemma (Poundstone, 2011).

One possible scenario would be one in which Serbia decided to cooperate fully with Austria-Hungary. This option would mean that Serbia fully accepted the ultimatum. At the same time, it simply hoped that Austria-Hungary would really respect the agreement after this and would not endanger Serbia's independence. However, this was far from a realistic scenario, because the acceptance of the ultimatum also automatically meant a violation of the sovereignty and independence of Serbia. In this scenario, Serbia, although probably falling back under the Austro-Hungarian sphere of influence, still survived as a subject without sacrificing a single soldier (scenario marked No. 1 in green - see upper left column of the table below). However, if Austria-Hungary decided to cheat and use this full cooperation of Serbia to unite, then this scenario is transformed into the scenario under No. 2

The second possible scenario was actually the worst for Serbia. Thus, Serbia, playing less naively, fully accepted the ultimatum, ignoring the open support from Russia. At the same time, Serbia hoped that there would be no change in the borders and that in this way it would prove its innocence in the assassination and remain independent. As a matter of fact, the opposite was happening. That is, Austria-Hungary used this situation to return Serbia to its sphere of influence as a transitional phase to the ultimate goal, which was to make it its integral part, similar to BiH. However, it was not realistic to expect that Serbia would voluntarily accept to fall under Austro-Hungarian influence again, despite all the historical events it had to go through to get out of it. Finally, ignoring the blank support provided by Russia was also unlikely (Scenario 2 marked in yellow - see upper right column of the table below).

The third possible scenario according to this theoretical framework would be if Serbia somehow managed to deceive Austria-Hungary by partially accepting the ultimatum which would not be realized in practice later, in addition to giving some promises of non-interference in BiH and other parts of the monarchy and thus turn international pressure on Austria-Hungary, which in turn would simply wait and not invade Serbia (Scenario No. 3 marked in yellow - see left column of the table below). With this scenario, Serbia not only survived, but also kept its entire territory without a single sacrificed soldier, further retaining its ambitions for BiH,

as well as the other territories in the monarchy that we have mentioned. However, such a scenario would be too naive to be realistic in terms of behavior in accordance with the contours of offensive realism by Austria-Hungary with the blank support received from Germany.

The fourth option for Serbia was a war with Austria-Hungary in a situation where it clearly rejected the ultimatum and it would be clear that it was trying to defend itself with dignity and was indisputably subject to aggression. Thus, this option contained the possibility of eventual extinction of Serbia as a subject, but the difference with the second scenario is that this option is the only option there (scenario No. 4 marked in red - see lower right column of the table below).

The analysis of what happened in practice tells us that, as a matter of fact, Serbia played some combination of scenarios with No. 3 and No. 4. Scenario No. 3 basically accepted the ultimatum in part, thus gaining sympathy for having done enough for an independent state. Furthermore, whatever happened, Serbia was a state only defending itself against the expansionist imperialist power of Austria-Hungary. However, the end result was that of scenario No. 4 because Austria-Hungary still committed aggression.

1. *Serbia fully accepts the ultimatum. Austria-Hungary is not performing aggression against Serbia.*	*2.* *Serbia has been deceived by Austria-Hungary and ceases to exist or ceases to be independent.*
3. *Austria-Hungary has been deceived by Serbia. There is no aggression and Serbia remains independent and a possible threat to the monarchy.*	*4.* *Serbia rejects the ultimatum in its entirety. Austria-Hungary is performing aggression.*

Display No.1. Theoretical framework "prisoner's dilemma": The case of Serbia and the threat from Austria-Hungary in 1914

Conclusions

The fact that the newly formed Serbia was a small state located on the border between the great Austro-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire seems to be indisputable. Serbia did not have some great resources and was located geographically, not so conveniently, without access to the sea and for a good part of the time with relatively hostile relations with its neighbors. However, defining Serbia as a small state contradicts a number of theoretical definitions. Thus, by one definition, small states are incapable of changing the rules of the game of the "big ones" (Archer, Bailes & Wiver, 2014) (in this direction of thought is Jaquet too; Jaquet, 1971). However, the previous analysis shows that Serbia still proved (to some extent) capable of maneuvering among the big ones. For instance, it managed to reject its dependence on Austria-Hungary. According to another definition, an essential element for a state to be considered a small power is that its demands and interests are limited to its own areas (Fox, 1959). Thus, it can be seen that Serbia projected its interests far beyond its own sovereign territory, both in the Ottoman Empire and in parts of Austria-Hungary. Furthermore, according to a certain definition, the leadership of the country was reconciled with the position of a marginal force, and such a position was confirmed by the other "players". According to Keohane, the very self-perception of the state elites was powerless to make any difference, and this puts the state in the group of small states (Keohane, 1969). Rothstein has a similar position, according to which small countries recognize that they are not able to enjoy security without relying on other countries, but this inability is also recognized by other countries (Rothstein, 1969). However, Serbia partially does not fit into these definitions either. Thus, its leadership (after the removal of its dependence on Austria-Hungary) was not perceived as a marginal power because in its projections, it had planned to conquer new territories at the expense of great states and great powers. In addition, other players did not always see Serbia as a marginal power that did not have the capacity to make any difference. Thus, Austria-Hungary considered that Serbia had the capacity to even be a threat to their territorial integrity. The definition is indisputably applicable in terms of reliance on other countries in order to achieve

security. For Serbia, it was Austria-Hungary first and later Russia. According to another definition, small states are consumers, not security policy makers (Army, 1964). The former is only partially true of Serbia. It considered that it could be the creator of a security policy if it realized certain of her plans to increase its territory and exit to the Adriatic. Also interesting is the definition according to which small states do not expect to be able to make a significant step by acting alone or even in small groups in terms of security (Keohane, 1969). This is only partially applicable to Serbia, and even to Bulgaria, which according to certain literature acted independently on several occasions and endangered even the survival of the Ottoman Empire. According to other authors, the small state was recognized by its characteristic of the weaker side in an asymmetric relationship, and was not able to change the nature of the function of that relationship (Archer, Bailes & Wivel, 2014). Previously, it was again only partially true of Serbia in the period before the arrival of King Peter. However, Serbia was definitely a small country by the following two definitions. Thus, a small state is one that cannot handle a war with a powerful state on an equal footing (Vandenbosch, 1964). According to Bjol the state is small only in relation to the larger one (Bjol, 1971). Knudseen believes that relationships, not size, are the deciding factor that can help define (Knudsen, 1996). We believe that the latter is a particularly important definition and this is why Serbia was indisputably a small state and a small power. However, the relations in international relations, the awakening of nationalism, the alliance with Russia, etc. made Serbia able to play "outside" the scope of what would be expected of a small power and within the previous definitions.

Hence, all this goes in favor of our basic claim that the resources available to the state, level of development, economy, military capabilities, diplomacy, history, geostrategic position and the importance at a given moment of the relations of forces in the international system are a combination of variables that create the degree of power of a particular state. Specifically, the possession of resources was not the main fact, but much more the way they are used and the decisions of the state leadership make the specific state to be powerful, whether it is a small or large state. Hence, the outcome in a particular situation will be due to the political decisions and the manner of use of these tools by the state leadership, normally in accordance with the geostrategic context and moment. Thus, the character of decision makers cannot be neglected.

Regarding the Serbian army, we can conclude that although it was not specially equipped (and by European standards even poorly equipped), from time to time there were attempts at modernization such as the purchase of new weapons from France. However, it was definitely and relatively experienced and had military traditions from the first Serbian uprising, through the Balkan Wars until the First World War. At home, however, there were some problems because the country itself was relatively new. The problems intensified with the annexation of Vardar Macedonia when problems arose regarding the administration of these new territories. Tensions and a kind of rivalry between the government and the military were particularly acute. There was no such thing in Austria-Hungary, but what the military leaders of the two countries had in common was the fact that they were in a more aggressive mood than the civilian leadership of their governments.

Externally, on the other hand, it seemed that Serbia always had a certain alliance that in some way guaranteed its security and with the help of which a balance was struck against the possible threat from another great power. Thus, in the beginning, it was Austria-Hungary against the Ottomans, but this was at a very high price for Serbia, putting it practically in a dependent position and a kind of semi-sovereign state. Later it was Russia (and to some extent France) against Austria-Hungary. Hence, Serbia was in a strong alliance with Russia, i.e., it entered into a balancing alliance with Austria-Hungary. When the Austro-Hungarian threat became real, Russia did not back down from its alliance because it coincided with their interests. Simply put, Serbia was a key part of the balance of power in the Balkans that Russia was unwilling to allow to its detriment. Although in the past, when Russian interests did not coincide with Serbian ones, Russia knew how to retaliate from the alliance and even bargain at the expense of Serbia's interests (e.g., Annexation of BiH). Practically, Russia and Austria-Hungary entered the so-called "chiken game" around Serbia. The non-departure of any of the players led to a really big clash and the First World War. In all these developments, Serbia chose maximum cooperation with its ally Russia. Some of Serbia's options allowed for a return to national pride and a return to the Austro-Hungarian embrace. The results obtained from the prisoner dilemma we wrote about above are illustrative enough for Serbia’s choices.

Hence Serbia was in a classic situation of trying to balance as explained by Waltz (Waltz, 1979). After all, the creation of Serbia was a

product (among other factors) of the change in the balance of power and the irreversible weakening of the Ottoman Empire. Serbia directly contributed to a new balance of power by defeating the Ottomans and Bulgaria during the Balkan wars. Serbia even wanted to go to war with Austria-Hungary over their annexation of BiH, but did not receive support from Russia for such a move. Hence, we conclude that whenever a new balance of power is in sight, neighboring countries feel summoned to react because if they do not, someone else will do it and the balance will be upset to their detriment. Due to all this, for a long time, this whole region was quite unstable. Internally, Serbia was building economic and military capabilities. Externally, it had an alliance with Russia, and built a basis for such a thing with France. However, these solid foundations for balance did not save her from military conflict. Obviously, Serbia's long-term intentions were not to maintain the status quo, but to want a new redistribution, and in fact Austria-Hungary, through a war with Serbia, wanted to maintain the status quo which it believed Serbia had the capacity to change in the long run and to strengthen its positions, etc. In all of this, the line between behavior in line with the contours of defensive and offensive realism is very small in the behavior of Austria-Hungary, which annexed BiH and later declared war on Serbia. What is interesting to note is that Austria-Hungary considered the re-subjugation of Serbia to be of particular importance to the monarchy because of the prevailing situation. Hence, we can say that Austria-Hungary, wanting to fulfill the goals of defensive realism (maintaining its own security) felt compelled to act within the framework of offensive realism (to gain as much power as possible). Nonetheless, a similar logic can be applied to Serbia. Thus, Serbia considered that the only way to have security is by increasing its territory and access to the sea. This is because, in that way, it would become a factor and truly independent from other countries. In the long run, Serbia predicted behavior in accordance with the contours of offensive realism, except in the moments of Austro-Hungarian aggression when it had to practically fight for the survival of the country. Hence the debate between defensive realists and offensive realists is largely superfluous. Thus, the state, above all, wanted to survive, but when that was already provided, it would want to have as much power as possible. If in the meantime its survival is called into question again, survival will be the main goal again. Serbia entered the conquest wars against the Ottomans, but when Austria-Hungary declared war, it found itself in a situation of struggle for survival.

This whole analysis was made in a multipolar system in the presence of multiple great powers and in the absence of a permanent international universal organization, i.e., in the classical situation of an anarchic system. Theoretically, this is a situation of structural realism where states behave selfishly looking at their own interests and not submitting to the interests of other states. Previous behavior shows the same characteristic of Austria-Hungary and Serbia, as well as their allies. As we have said, the two main actors in this analysis mainly acted in accordance with the contours of offensive realism.

Regarding the debate in both directions for the creation of a security dilemma, it seems that the representatives of the offensive realism win, who claim that it is inevitable, unlike the defensive realists who think that sometimes it can be avoided. Thus, in this particular situation, both countries were safe. Austria-Hungary was safe because of its own capabilities and Serbia was safe primarily because of the alliance with Russia, and yet there was a war. Undoubtedly, the two countries were in a situation of security dilemma (Jervis 1978), but certainly not in that classical theoretical framework of it. Therefore, one of the essential elements in establishing its existence is the lack of a real desire to start a war, but circumstances and tensions have led to that. However, our analysis shows that the ruling circles in the monarchy wanted war (or at least considered it inevitable). Similarly, in Serbia, it was considered that at some point in time, a war over BiH was inevitable. It can now be argued that Serbia did not want the war at that particular moment when it started. On the other hand, we have in part the moment of misinterpretation of other people's attempts for greater protection as aggressive behavior. Thus, Serbia bought weapons from France. However, the part of the security dilemma that says that one of the reasons for its creation is the lack of communication or misunderstood communication between stakeholders is not fully secured in this case because certain communication still existed, and we do not have any misinterpretation of signals. This means that the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum has no possibilities for different interpretations except as a real threat of war. Regarding the intensity of the security dilemma, in our case, it was in the first of the four options proposed by Jervis (Jervis, 1978), i.e., offensive and defensive behavior can practically be distinguished. However, being offensive has a slight advantage. It is a situation of very intense security dilemma, where the status quo states behave aggressively, and the chances of cooperation are very small.

Therefore, this is a definition of our example and behavior primarily for Austria-Hungary and for Serbia.

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Ascesa e declino dei commercianti-banchieri greci di Livorno, 1793-1891

Gian Carlo Falco

È ampiamente studiato l'apporto dei Greci a uno dei più importanti processi di integrazione economica internazionale dell'Ottocento, l'esportazione di grano dall'Ucraina e dalla Russia sud orientale verso il Mediterraneo e l'Europa occidentali, in cambio di un flusso di manufatti europei e di prodotti coloniali importati da Russia e Impero Ottomano. Era un flusso commerciale nuovo: il grano non era più esportato dai porti settentrionali da cui partiva fra il XVII secolo e la seconda metà del XVIII, grazie alla conquista russa delle rive settentrionale e orientale del Mar Nero, che per quasi 3 secoli era stato un mare interno all'Impero Ottomano. Quel flusso commerciale assicurò fino alla Prima Guerra Mondiale, una cospicua voce attiva della bilancia commerciale russa, di grande importanza per lo sviluppo economico dell'Impero zarista, anche se con il tempo l'esportazione russa di cereali dovette misurarsi con la concorrenza agguerrita di altri grandi produttori, a cominciare dagli Stati Uniti.

Quel flusso divenne possibile a prezzo di una lunga e onerosa sequenza di campagne militari combattute tra Impero Russo e Ottomano, durata circa 90 anni (1767-1856), se si esclude l'ultimo conflitto concluso dal congresso di Berlino del 1878, svoltosi in un contesto ormai molto diverso. E si dovettero realizzare consistenti innovazioni per ottenere la produzione e la commercializzazione dei cereali, affrontando, in particolare, il popolamento di vasti territori e la costruzione di infrastrutture indispensabili per lo sviluppo del commercio internazionale, oltre a mobilitare ed attrarre le risorse e le competenze che erano funzionali a quello scopo[1].

Gli studi apparsi nell'ultimo ventennio hanno messo in evidenza le ragioni della particolare efficacia dei Greci nell'avviare quel processo e sfruttare per circa mezzo secolo le opportunità di notevole guadagno che

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[1] Jean-Louis Van Regemorter, "La Russie méridionale, la mer Noire et le commerce international de 1774 à 1861", *Revue des études slaves*, vol. 55 (1983), fasc. 2, pp. 371-373; Constantin Ardeleanu, "The opening and development of the Black Sea for international trade and shipping (1774-1853)", *Euxeinos*, 14 (2014), pp. 30-52.

consentiva: ne sarebbero derivate le fortune della flotta mercantile greca[2]. I commercianti e i capitani di navi greci poterono sfruttare per qualche decennio alcuni peculiari vantaggi. Erano aiutati nei loro traffici dalla posizione che la maggior parte di loro aveva (almeno fino al 1831) di sudditi ottomani. Per molti anni poterono accedere al Mar Nero e attraversare gli Stretti più facilmente di chiunque altro ed essere protetti dai corsari ottomani che fino ai primi anni del decennio1830 costituirono un pericolo concreto per i trasporti marittimi nel Mediterraneo. Ma potevano godere anche di un trattamento fiscale e doganale più favorevole se riuscivano a rientrare nel regime delle capitolazioni grazie alla loro capacità di mediare tra Europei e potere ottomano. Nello stesso tempo erano corteggiati e apprezzati dal potere russo per ragioni in parte mitologiche (la continuità ideale tra impero bizantino e impero zarista, l'esaltazione della contiguità religiosa, considerata fondamento di una comune civiltà contrapposta a quella islamica), ma anche per motivi molto concreti. Contribuivano a rimediare alla mancanza di sudditi competenti in campi importanti per il progresso della Russia (a cominciare da navigazione e commercio) e fornire abitanti leali allo zar e ostili agli Ottomani nelle zone di colonizzazione e popolamento della Russia meridionale, della Crimea e dell'Ucraina. Avevano competenze e conoscenze indispensabili per il commercio ed erano in grado di applicare soluzioni organizzative funzionali agli scambi internazionali grazie ai legami fra le comunità della diaspora greca. Erano marinai esperti e coraggiosi che disponevano di imbarcazioni adatte a navigare nel Mar Nero e nel Mediterraneo: non molto grosse, per passare facilmente tra isole e insenature, e funzionali al traffico di cabotaggio. Potevano imporsi nel commercio di esportazione del grano russo senza troppa difficoltà: non servivano capitali molto consistenti per avviarlo. La povertà delle isole e della terraferma dove vivevano assicurava il reclutamento dei marinai. Le guerre prolungate che, tra 1793 e 1814 impegnarono gli stati europei ridussero drasticamente la competitività delle loro flotte che in passato avevano monopolizzato il traffico marittimo nel Mediterraneo. Infine il grano era un prodotto relativamente facile da collocare, soprattutto se le guerre assorbivano una parte consistente della manodopera in Occidente e aumentavano il fabbisogno di cereali importati. Le oscillazioni di prezzo

[2] Vasiles A. Kardasis, *Diaspora merchants in the Black Sea: the Greeks in Southern Russia, 1775-1861*, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Oxford, Lexington Books, 2001.

che caratterizzavano quella merce potevano offrire grandi opportunità se si disponeva di informazioni tempestive , grazie a una rete di osservatori sui vari mercati, e si prendevano le decisioni prontamente, come consentiva la relativa autonomia dei membri delle diverse famiglie mercantili della diaspora.

Così i Greci si imposero nel commercio dei cereali russi e riuscirono ad approfittare pienamente di una congiuntura favorevole, arricchendosi rapidamente. Non avevano concorrenti nell'entroterra russo, dove compravano i cereali dai produttori, spesso prima del raccolto o immediatamente dopo e pagando in contanti per spuntare prezzi più convenienti, con una moneta che tendeva a svalutarsi più velocemente di quelle dei mercati di destinazione, a causa della fragilità del sistema finanziario zarista. Non avevano rivali nel trasporto. Potevano rivendere il grano nei porti di destinazione facendo loro il prezzo. Queste condizioni si modificarono profondamente nei decenni successivi, anche se non completamente, perlomeno fino alla Grande Guerra, dal momento che i Greci conservarono un ruolo importante nel commercio del grano proveniente dai porti del Mar d'Azov. Altri commercianti riusciranno ad affermarsi, quando lo sviluppo (tardivo) della rete ferroviaria russa spostò verso le stazioni ferroviarie dell'interno i punti di raccolta dei cereali dopo la mietitura. I cereali esportati non erano più prodotti quasi esclusivamente da proprietari che si valevano di lavoro servile e potevano trascurare il problema dei costi. Con l'affrancamento dei contadini del 1861 anche i coltivatori, con appezzamenti più o meno grandi, erano impegnati nella commercializzazione del loro prodotto per sopravvivere e mantenere la loro terra. Solo i commercianti greci che facevano capo ai porti del Mar d'Azov (Taganrog, il più antico, Mariupol e Rostov, il più recente, servito dalla ferrovia) difendevano efficacemente la loro posizione e continuavano a occuparsi congiuntamente di commercio e trasporto. Il cambiamento nelle condizioni di acquisto dei raccolti favorì l'intervento di nuovi acquirenti: grandi imprese internazionali che impiegavano mediatori ebrei. I mutamenti cominceranno ad essere evidenti pochi anni dopo la guerra di Crimea e solleciteranno la riconversione dei commercianti greci che si specializzarono nel trasporto marittimo o avviarono in Russia attività manifatturiere, immobiliari o finanziarie.

È stato meno studiato il comportamento economico dei mercanti e banchieri che curavano il collocamento sui mercati occidentali dei cereali russi e ucraini, per evidenziare il loro rapporto con le economie in cui

operavano. Lo schema di comportamento che seguivano riproduceva (come ho anticipato) quello tradizionale delle minoranze etniche e religiose attive nel commercio internazionale europeo: mantenevano solide relazioni familiari e comunitarie che li aiutavano efficacemente ad avere una buona conoscenza delle condizioni dei principali mercati, permettevano di condividere e frazionare i rischi e mobilitare risorse anche in situazioni di relativa arretratezza del credito. Il commercio marittimo era spesso associato a operazioni di sconto cambiario, al cambio delle valute e all'assicurazione navale. Era ricorrente la commistione tra operazioni commerciali e operazioni di tipo finanziario.

Livorno contribuiva con particolare efficacia all'obiettivo di spuntare i prezzi più favorevoli sui cereali provenienti dal Mar Nero[3]. Era in posizione centrale nel Mediterraneo occidentale e attirava molte navi che vi trovavano facilmente dei carichi. Dal XVII secolo era porto libero: era possibile depositarvi merci in transito con oneri limitati e certi, senza dazi se le merci erano riesportate; disponeva di strutture adeguate per la quarantena di merci e persone e di una grande capacità di immagazzinamento di cereali, a lungo la maggiore del Mediterraneo[4]. Perciò poteva accogliere il grano proveniente dal Mar Nero sulle navi di qualsiasi bandiera per trasbordarlo su quelle dei paesi a cui era destinato e aggirare le disposizioni protezionistiche degli stati europei che ricalcavano il *Navigation Act* britannico e discriminavano i vettori stranieri a favore delle rispettive marine mercantili. Il ruolo di Livorno fu rafforzato grazie alla diffusa applicazione di dazi d'importazione sul grano, una tendenza che si generalizzò nel decennio 1820, quando i prezzi dei cereali in Europa, finite le guerre e l'inflazione che le aveva accompagnate, calarono nettamente e vari stati cercarono di proteggere la produzione nazionale. A partire dal 1828 la Gran Bretagna adottò il criterio di variare i dazi in funzione inversa dei prezzi interni dei cereali. Se i prezzi interni scendevano si aumentavano i dazi per proteggere i produttori nazionali; se

[3] Patricia Ann Herlihy, *Russian grain and Mediterranean markets, 1774-1861*, University of Pennsylvania, PhD Thesis, 1963, University Microfilm Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan, pp. 176-204; Patricia Herlihy, "Russian Wheat and the Port of Livorno 1794-1865", *The Journal of European Economic History*, V (1976), pp. 45-68; Despina Vlamy, "Commerce and industry in the Greek communities. Livorno in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries", *Diogenes*, vol. 45, n. 177 (Spring 1997), pp. 73-92.

[4] Jean Pierre Filippini, *Il porto di Livorno e la Toscana (1676-1814)*, 3 voll., Napoli, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1998, vol. 2, pp. 119-121.

i prezzi aumentavano, segnalando un difetto di disponibilità da correggere con le importazioni, si riduceva la protezione daziaria. Diversi stati europei seguirono l'esempio britannico. I cereali ucraini e russi potevano essere temporaneamente immagazzinati a Livorno per essere avviati al mercato che assicurava le condizioni di vendita più favorevoli, tenuto conto dei dazi e dei prezzi.

Grazie a queste opportunità Livorno conobbe un'importante ripresa del traffico, specialmente a partire dal decennio 1830, anche se l'abrogazione del *Navigation Act* britannico e la progressiva eliminazione dei dazi variabili da parte dei paesi europei, a partire dalla revoca delle *Corn Laws* britanniche nel 1846, resero meno utile il ruolo di Livorno. Nella stessa direzione andò la diffusione del trasporto su navi a vapore di grande stazza che rendeva poco conveniente interrompere i viaggi e duplicare le operazioni di carico e scarico. I viaggi diretti ai porti di destinazione finale diventarono la regola.

Questi mutamenti si verificarono quasi contemporaneamente alla riduzione dell'impegno nel commercio internazionale di grano dei rami russi delle famiglie mercantili greche. Anche a Livorno, come a Odessa, si cercarono delle alternative.

Una comunità greca era presente a Livorno già dalla seconda metà del '500 per fornire marinai alla flotta militare del Granduca. Nel corso del tempo la sua composizione era mutata: era cresciuto il numero dei mercanti, in larga misura impegnati nel commercio con l'Impero Ottomano di cui erano sudditi nella maggior parte dei casi; la quota di quelli provenienti dalle isole dello Ionio, in parte sotto dominio veneziano, e dal loro entroterra, era inferiore a quella dei Greci provenienti dall'Egeo e questo aveva comportato una presenza minoritaria di cattolici di rito greco, originari delle Isole Ionie, rispetto agli ortodossi dell'Egeo o dei territori continentali. Alla fine del XVIII secolo, quando nel Mediterraneo occidentale arrivarono i primi carichi di cereali russi che si aggiungevano al tradizionale commercio con i porti ottomani, e le guerre tra Francia e Gran Bretagna ridussero l'attività delle flotte mercantili europee favorendo l'affermazione di armatori greci, la città vide aumentare la propria colonia di Greci. Tra loro comparivano i membri di diverse famiglie mercantili originarie di Chios (Maurogordato, Rodocanacchi, Scaramangà, Pappudoff, Schilizzi, Castelli, Vlastò), reciprocamente imparentate grazie a una politica matrimoniale rigorosa, che riusciva ad assicurare anche i rapporti

commerciali con i porti russi del Mar Nero e del Mar d'Azov[5]. Almeno una parte di quei mercanti, armatori e proprietari di navi, nel ventennio e più in cui furono applicate politiche di blocco delle relazioni commerciali fra stati belligeranti, riuscì a trarre vantaggio dall'impiego di navi protette da bandiere neutrali (come fu per qualche tempo il Granducato di Toscana prima delle occupazioni francesi e dell'annessione all'Impero napoleonico; o lo stato che tra 1801 e 1806 riunì le isole ionie). Ma era possibile approfittare anche del commercio delle prede belliche catturate in mare. In quel periodo fu possibile fare abbastanza rapidamente fortuna con il commercio internazionale, sfruttare l'inflazione, trarre vantaggio dall'alienazione dei beni ecclesiastici, dalle forniture militari o dalle sottoscrizioni di debito pubblico.

A Livorno emersero particolarmente i Rodocanacchi e Maurogordato, da tempo impegnati nel commercio internazionale, che conducevano attraverso una rete di "stabilimenti" o *comptoirs* gestiti solidalmente da parenti nei porti e nelle città del Mediterraneo funzionali alla gestione dei loro traffici. Un ramo in particolare si specializzò nel commercio del grano proveniente dal Mar Nero e dal Mare d'Azov e su questa attività innestò quella di banca e assicurazione, una pratica largamente seguita per buona parte dell'Ottocento, riuscendo ad accumulare una grande fortuna.

Qualche membro di quelle famiglie era a Livorno già prima della Rivoluzione francese. Un Giorgio Rodocanacchi, zio materno di Giorgio Maurogordato, che sarà il principale esponente della famiglia in quella città, era commerciante nel 1768[6]. Ditte con quei nomi sono registrate dagli almanacchi locali nei primissimi anni dopo il Congresso di Vienna e compaiono nella raccolta delle circolari conservate nell'Archivio storico della Camera di commercio.

Nel 1816 una circolare depositata alla Camera di commercio informava che dal 15 luglio veniva istituito a Livorno uno "stabilimento"

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[5] Non erano gli unici presenti a Livorno: Panaioti Palli, per esempio, era arrivato a Livorno da Janina in Epiro nel 1788. I Mimbelli si stabilirono a Livorno solo dopo il 1853 venendo da Orebic in Dalmazia. I Ralli non avviarono un proprio commercio nella città, ma contrassero matrimoni con Greci di Livorno.

[6] Ch. Tur, *A Georges Maurogordato né à Chio en 1813, mort à Paris le 7 octobre 1886. Éloge funèbre prononcé le 18 octobre 1886 dans l'Église greque-orientale de Livourne*, Livourne, Imprimerie de Gius. Meucci, 1886. La fonte ha permesso di precisare alcuni nomi e qualche dettaglio biografico su Giorgio Maurogordato.

della ditta Maurogordato Figli di Gio. che formava un'unica ditta con quella esistente a Smirne sotto la stessa ragione sociale, per fare affari in contro proprio e per commissione. La direzione e la firma della ditta livornese erano attribuite a Demetrio Maurogordato. Nell'ottobre 1821 veniva annunziata la liquidazione della ditta livornese, ad opera di Giorgio Baltari, come se Demetrio fosse stato costretto a lasciare definitivamente la città[7]. Gli annuari del 1816 e 1818 indicavano inoltre una ditta Rodocanacchi e C. sugli scali dei Domenicani; anche questa costituiva un'unica azienda con quelle presenti a Smirne e Costantinopoli. Una circolare del 30 aprile 1819 informava che la ditta veniva liquidata per aver raggiunto il suo termine[8]. Al suo posto ne sorsero tre, attive per diversi decenni. La prima era la Rodocanacchi F.lli, a cui partecipavano Francesco, Michele, Emanuele e Stamati, figli di Demetrio di Chios, che disponevano di uno "stabilimento" anche a Costantinopoli[9]. Nel 1823 Michele costituì una nuova ditta con Pietro Rodocanacchi fu Antonio di Smirne, sciolta nell'ottobre 1825. Si associò con Michele Raggio (anche lui di Chios) tra l'inizio 1837 e il giugno 1838; poi divenne socio accomandatario in una nuova società con il Raggio e con Tommaso Rodocanacchi ma se ne disimpegnò, lasciandone la direzione al solo Reggio che modificò la ragione sociale. Michele morì nel 1843 e le sue attività furono liquidate dal suo ultimo socio, Cristoforo Demetriadi insieme con Jacopo Bellani[10].

Anche Francesco Rodocanacchi fondò una ditta col proprio nome in una data che non è possibile determinare. Nel maggio 1833 autorizzò il nipote Giorgio, figlio di Emanuele, socio fondatore della Rodocanacchi Fratelli nel 1819, a firmare le ricevute delle riscossioni; nell'agosto 1835 nominò suo procuratore Stamaty Drizzanò e lo riconfermò nel giugno 1837. Ma a partire dal 1 gennaio 1840 suo procuratore fu il nipote Giorgio, nel frattempo adottato, in riconoscimento del suo zelo e dei suoi meriti. 14 anni più tardi, morto il padre adottivo, Giorgio di Emanuele Rodocanacchi annunciò che avrebbe continuato la ditta Rodocanacchi Francesco. Nel

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[7] Archivio Storico della Camera di commercio di Livorno (d'ora in poi ASCCLi]), Circolari, f. 1880. L'*Almanacco di Livorno per l'anno 1818*, Livorno, Zecchini, 1818, precisava che la ditta si trovava in via della Pera.

[8] ASCCLi, Circolari, f. 2591.

[9] ASCCLi, Circolari, f. 2594. Massimo Sanacore, "La saga di un'illustre, 'sconosciuta' famiglia greca a Livorno: l'arrivo, il successo e l'eclisse dei Maurogordato", *Nuovi Studi Livornesi*, XII (2005), pp. 82-85.

[10] ASCCLi, Circolari, ff. 2595, 2596.

marzo 1861 ne decise la liquidazione: voleva trasferirsi a Costantinopoli per seguire la liquidazione della Gio. Rodocanacchi e C. dal cui esito dipendeva quello della ditta livornese. Nominò liquidatore L. N. Scaramangà che ottenne una moratoria dal Tribunale e l'autorizzazione a versare i crediti che spettavano alla ditta Rodocanacchi Francesco al suo rappresentante Giovanni Pappudoff[11]: i nomi ci ricordano la coesione della comunità mercantile greca e quanto questa incidesse nella gestione degli affari.

La terza ditta costituita dopo lo scioglimento della Rodocanacchi e C. nel 1819 fu la Rodocanacchi Fratelli & C., la maggiore e la più longeva di quelle che portavano quel nome.

Essa fu costituita per iniziativa della sua omonima di Smirne che annunziò l'apertura di due "stabilimenti", a Livorno e a Costantinopoli, dal 1 maggio 1819[12]. La direzione di Livorno e la firma sarebbero spettate a Giorgio Rodocanacchi. Nel 1822 fu portata in tribunale da Francesca di Demetrio Maurogordato (forse il responsabile della ditta Figli di Giovanni Maurogordato citata sopra), vedova Sgutta, di Trieste, che reclamava la restituzione di 2000 pezze d'oro versate nel 1817 (evidentemente alla Rodocanacchi e C.) come investimento che doveva rendere il 7% annuo[13]. La notizia evoca l'importanza dei legami personali nel mobilitare i finanziamenti alle aziende e nello stesso tempo conferma il ruolo bancario delle ditte commerciali, che raccoglievano depositi e assumevano la gestione di patrimoni. In quello stesso anno, in ottobre, dopo l'impiccagione di Pantaleone e Pietro Rodocanacchi nella rappresaglia ottomana contro Chios iniziata nell'aprile 1822, la ditta Rodocanacchi Fratelli & C. veniva liquidata. I vecchi soci, eccetto Nicola Scaramangà, ne costituirono un'altra sotto la stessa ragione sociale, per continuare lo stesso commercio, con gli stessi criteri. Precisavano di avere mantenuto uno "stabilimento" anche a Odessa e annunziavano la prossima apertura di un altro a Marsiglia. Pandeli e Giorgio Rodocanacchi, con Matteo di Giorgio Maurogordato (marito di Arghirò Rodocanacchi) avevano la firma sociale. La nuova ditta appare subito nettamente specializzata nel commercio del grano, come emerge dall'organizzazione su scala continentale di cui si dota; i suoi gestori dovevano avere già ben chiare le linee di sviluppo su cui si sarebbe dovuta muovere e lo specifico ruolo che Livorno poteva svolgere grazie alla posizione, alla capienza dei suoi depositi di cereali, alla lunga

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[11] ASCCLi, Circolari, f. 2593.
[12] ASCCLi, Circolari, f. 2592.
[13] M. Sanacore, *La saga*, cit., p. 101, n. 9.

pratica nel commercio del grano e ai privilegi tariffari di cui il porto godeva. È probabile che i suoi soci avessero maturato una sufficiente esperienza in proposito negli anni di grave carenza della disponibilità di grano in Europa occidentale che accompagnò la conclusione delle guerre napoleoniche e i primi anni di pace e si registrò un netto aumento di esportazioni di grano dal Mar Nero, collocate a prezzi molto vantaggiosi in Occidente. Il decennio 1820 vide invece la drastica riduzione dei prezzi e una forte richiesta di protezione da parte dei produttori occidentali. Per i commercianti che rifornivano di cereali dal Mar Nero i porti europei risultò decisivo poter imporre ai produttori di Ucraina e Russia meridionale prezzi di acquisto bassi rispetto ai prezzi di vendita e disporre di un'organizzazione di trasporto e vendita flessibile per cogliere le opportunità offerte dalle fluttuazioni dei prezzi di vendita e dei dazi sui diversi mercati. Livorno si prestava bene, come si è detto, a raggiungere questo risultato e anche l'organizzazione adottata dai commercianti greci vi contribuiva efficacemente. La complementarità con Marsiglia permetteva di avere una sollecita e precisa percezione dell'evoluzione di un mercato rilevante come quello francese; inoltre era un centro importante per la circolazione delle tratte commerciali [14]. In seguito la ditta Rodocanacchi si sarebbe installata anche a Parigi, fondamentale centro finanziario per lo sconto e la regolazione delle cambiali, e a Londra, massimo centro finanziario e assicurativo, riferimento fondamentale per l'armamento marittimo mondiale e principale destinazione del grano russo e ucraino. Finalmente, data la crescente importanza dei porti del Mar d'Azov per l'imbarco del grano, fu organizzato uno "stabilimento" anche a Taganrog.

L'affermazione della ditta si realizzò sotto la guida di Giorgio Rodocanacchi, negli anni di forte incremento dell'esportazione di grano russo e ucraino e di applicazione delle tariffe variabili sulle importazioni di cereali da parte di Gran Bretagna, Belgio, Francia e altri stati. Nel 1845, dopo la morte di Giorgio, il nipote Emanuele, figlio di Pandeli, prese il suo posto, affiancato da Giorgio Maurogordato. Questi era nato nel 1813 a Chios ed era figlio di Matteo di Giorgio, associato alla ditta nel 1822; era morto nel 1831, dopo aver migliorato la sua posizione, ma senza giocare un ruolo di primo piano fra i soci. Suo figlio Giorgio si era trasferito a Marsiglia, nella ditta di Pandeli e Théodore Rodocanacchi, collegata a

[14] Marsiglia era diventato il maggior porto cerealicolo del Mediterraneo e il riferimento obbligato dei traffici della Francia con il Medio Oriente e l'Africa Settentrionale, già prima della conquista francese dell'Algeria.

quella di Livorno, per farvi pratica d'affari. Si era sposato nel 1839 con Fanny Vlastò, anche lei di famiglia chiota, ed era tornato nel porto toscano. Dalla moglie ebbe tre figli: Matteo nel 1841, Arghirò e Michele[15]. Il suo ruolo nella ditta divenne presto preponderante; gli venivano riconosciuti abilità e tempismo nel concludere vantaggiosamente gli affari e riuscì a incrementare e consolidare le fortune sociali estendendo progressivamente il campo di attività dell'azienda dal commercio internazionale del grano alle attività in qualche modo complementari dell'assicurazione e della banca (come aveva cominciato a fare Giorgio Rodocanacchi) e, successivamente, alle operazioni finanziarie legate alla costruzione del sistema ferroviario, prima al livello del Granducato, poi a quello nazionale. La sua preminenza nella ditta fu sancita nel 1853 dalla decisione di Emanuele Rodocanacchi fu Pandeli, di Livorno, e di Emanuele Rodocanacchi fu Paolo, di Marsiglia, di ritirarsi dal commercio e non partecipare più alla Rodocanacchi Figli e C. tanto a Livorno che negli altri stabilimenti esteri. Giorgio Maurogordato si associò a Pandeli Rodocanacchi, rimasto nella ditta fino alla morte, nel 1882.

A metà decennio 1840 arrivarono i primi riconoscimenti dell'affermazione della ditta e dei suoi soci. Emanuele di Giorgio Rodocanacchi fu primo consigliere della Chiesa greca ortodossa di rito orientale della SS. Trinità tra 1845 e 1849[16]. Nel 1843 l'importanza della ditta Rodocanacchi nel commercio estero granducale fu riconosciuta con la nomina di Teodoro Rodocanacchi di Odessa, uno dei maggiori commercianti di grano dell'epoca, a console generale del Granducato di Toscana a Odessa. L'incarico fu confermato fino al 1858, alla vigilia della fine del Granducato[17]. Dal 1847 Emanuele Rodocanacchi fu inserito nell'albo della nobiltà livornese[18]. Pochi anni più tardi la distinzione era

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[15] M. Sanacore, *La saga*, cit., p. 85.

[16] Si adotta una forma breve standardizzata per indicare gli annuari di Livorno nonostante cambino spesso il titolo. *Nuova guida civile e commerciale della città* ecc., formula usata fino al 1855, diventa NGCC seguito dalla data di pubblicazione. Tra 1858 e 1881 si usa l'indicazione *Meozzi* seguita dalla data di pubblicazione. *NGCC 1845* e *NGCC 1849*; non più indicato in *Meozzi 1858*.

[17] *NGGC 1843*, *NGGC 1845*, *NGGC 1855*, *Meozzi 1858*. Nel 1858 Teodoro Rodocanacchi fu affiancato da Carlo Nozzolini come viceconsole. Nel 1855, l'anno centrale della guerra di Crimea, un Teodoro Rodocanacchi fu Pandia, forse cugino, era console generale del Granducato a San Pietroburgo.

[18] La nobilitazione di Emanuele Rodocanacchi è segnalata per la prima volta dalla *Nuova guida civile e commerciale. Città e porto franco di Livorno*, Antonelli, 1847 (d'ora in poi *NGCC*,

attribuita anche a Pandeli[19] che tra 1855 e 1877, poté fregiarsi anche dei titoli di console delle Repubbliche del Cile e dell'Equador[20], essere insignito dell'Ordine Mauriziano da Vittorio Emanuele II (1872) e diventare cavaliere del Salvatore della Grecia e dell'Ordine di Cristo del Portogallo. Finalmente, nel 1857, anche Giorgio Maurogordato fu nobilitato[21], in un momento in cui godeva di alto prestigio e influenza, come indicava la moltiplicazione dei suoi incarichi e confermava l'esibizione di ricchezza rappresentata dalla costruzione di un grandioso palazzo neorinascimentale sugli scali di Porta Murata, in una zona di recente urbanizzazione. I soci della ditta Rodocanacchi conducevano una vita dispendiosa e brillante che ne faceva un punto di riferimento mondano per la società locale; solo i Larderel, nobili proprietari terrieri e industriali, li superavano. I Rodocanacchi coltivavano la passione per i cavalli e dotarono la grande villa extraurbana che si fecero costruire di una grande scuderia. Pandeli Rodocanacchi coltivò anche una viva passione per il teatro. Nel 1847 era membro dell'Accademia del Teatro degli Avvalorati, l'associazione che sosteneva le attività del più antico teatro livornese. Dal 1855 era proprietario dell'Imperial Regio Teatro Leopoldo, un grande teatro costruito nel 1843-1847, venduto dai costruttori e, nel 1860, ribattezzato Goldoni. Pandeli era vicepresidente dell'Accademia filodrammatica dei Concordi che ne gestiva l'attività e dal 1869 era vicepresidente dell'Accademia del Teatro Goldoni, fondata nel 1869 da 50 soci che versarono 2.000 lire ciascuno. Ma dal 1873 si dedicò all'Accademia dei Fulgidi che si occupava del Teatro Rossini, fondato nel 1842, a fianco di Giorgio Maurogordato, di Nicola Scaramangà e di Matteo Maurogordato, che cominciava ad aumentare la propria visibilità nella vita sociale livornese. Fino al 1881 i quattro si alternarono nelle cariche di presidente e

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seguita dall'indicazione dell'anno) e viene confermata nelle edizioni successive fino a *Meozzi 1865* compresa.

[19] Pandeli Rodocanacchi è citato per la prima volta come nobile nella *NGCC 1855*.

[20] *Meozzi 1858*, *Meozzi 1860*, *Meozzi 1865*, *Meozzi 1867*, *Meozzi 1872*, *Meozzi 1873*, *Meozzi 1877*, *Meozzi 1879*. Il titolo non aveva grande rilevanza pratica, anche perché le relazioni con Livorno dei due paesi erano modeste, ma dava prestigio. Poteva avere maggiore importanza pratica la nomina di Stefano Mimbelli come console di Toscana a Mariupol, benché fosse attribuita alla fine del Granducato.

[21] *Meozzi 1858*. In quell'anno Giorgio Maurogordato risiedeva ancora in via del Casone 4; abita nel nuovo palazzo secondo *Meozzi 1867*.

di consigliere[22] e probabilmente ebbero un peso nel promuovere l'attività del teatro e il suo finanziamento. Forse i soci della ditta Rodocanacchi Figli e C. influirono in questo modo sull'intensa vita teatrale livornese del secondo Ottocento, come pare fosse ambizione di molti altri commercianti, banchieri, imprenditori di Livorno, membri delle diverse Accademie cittadine. Era più scontata la partecipazione di quegli stessi soci ai clubs che offrivano alla borghesia d'affari livornese opportunità d'incontro e frequentazione. Pandeli Rodocanacchi, per esempio, dal 1849 era consigliere delle Stanze civili, un circolo fondato nel 1806 e rinnovato con un nuovo statuto nel 1840. Nel 1845 Giorgio Maurogordato era, invece, uno degli ispettori settimanali che facevano rispettare il regolamento del Casino del Commercio, un'associazione che gestiva un lussuoso appartamento del centro urbano dove era ammesso un ristretto numero di soci in cambio di un'elevata quota "per ritrovarsi, conversare, leggere, giocare a giochi leciti e ritrovi mondani in occasione di balli; con partecipazione esclusiva", come recitava lo Statuto del 1866. Nel 1858 era uno dei tre conservatori[23].

L'ascesa sociale di Giorgio Maurogordato poggiava sull'accumulazione di una solida fortuna che, si è già detto, veniva incrementata non solo dall'abile gestione del commercio del grano ma da operazioni che avevano uno spiccato carattere finanziario. La comunità mercantile livornese ne riconobbe il successo con l'elezione a deputato della Camera di Commercio nel 1849; divenne reggente nel 1855 e vicepresidente nel 1858, quando era presidente Pietro Bastogi, il più importante degli uomini d'affari livornesi affermatisi dopo la Restaurazione che dopo pochissimi anni avrebbe avuto un ruolo importante e controverso nelle scelte ferroviarie nazionali.

Egli fu nuovamente deputato della Camera di Commercio dopo l'Unificazione nel 1860 e nel 1867; fu presidente nel 1872-1873 e nel 1876-1877; nuovamente consigliere nel 1880-1881, anni in cui ebbe la stessa carica Giovanni Corradini, suo importante socio in affari come vedremo[24].

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[22] *Meozzi 1872*, *Meozzi 1876*, *Meozzi 1877*, *Meozzi 1878*, *Meozzi 1881*. Sottolinea ulteriormente il forte legame tra la ditta Rodocanacchi e il Teatro Rossini e l'Accademia dei Fulgidi la carica di camerlengo che vi ebbe Emanuele Rodocanacchi nel 1849. Fu provveditore nel 1855 e presidente nel 1860. *NGCC 1849*, *NGCC 1855*.

[23] *NGCC 1845*, *NGCC 1849*, *Meozzi 1858*.

[24] *NGCC 1849; NGCC 1855, Meozzi 1858, Meozzi 1860; Meozzi 1867; Meozzi 1872; Meozzi 1873; Meozzi 1876; Meozzi 1877; Meozzi 1879* avverte che deputati e consiglieri erano sostituiti, a casusa dello scioglimento temporaneo della Camera di commercio, dal consigliere di prefettura Giuseppe Stefanopoli. *Meozzi 1880; Meozzi 1881*.

L'attività commerciale della ditta Rodocanacchi era stata affiancata piuttosto presto da un'attività assicurativa, già sotto la guida di Giorgio Rodocanacchi. Se ne trovano testimonianze almeno fra 1843 e 1877[25]. La ditta operava come assicuratore indipendente, cioè senza fare da agente di una società anonima di assicurazione. Probabilmente così riusciva a internalizzare il costo di un servizio fondamentale e proponendolo anche ad altri ripartiva rischi e costi. Nel 1843 esistevano a Livorno 10 assicuratori indipendenti e diversi tra loro erano commercianti di grano. Tuttavia il numero degli indipendenti era già sceso a 7 nel 1845; 10 anni più tardi, insieme con la ditta Rodocanacchi, solo più la ditta Pappudoff Fratelli, anche loro commercianti di grano russo, esercitava ancora quell'attività. Nel 1860 il numero di assicuratori indipendenti aumentò nuovamente grazie ai Mimbelli, commercianti di grano provenienti dalla Dalmazia e attivi nel Mar d'Azov, e alla ditta Reggio e Demetriadi[26]. Ma nel 1877 Rodocanacchi e Mimbelli erano gli unici assicuratori indipendenti rimasti, mentre ormai sulla piazza di Livorno operavano 31 società assicuratrici; molte coprivano ogni genere di rischio; diverse erano estere e tutte si servivano di agenti. Rispetto agli assicuratori indipendenti potevano assumere rischi maggiori, come imponeva l'aumento di valore dei singoli vettori e dei loro carichi, ripartendoli più efficacemente su una clientela più vasta. L'annuario livornese del 1880 non segnalava più assicuratori indipendenti.

Il coinvolgimento della ditta Rodocanacchi nel settore bancario al di fuori dell'azienda, è segnalato per la prima volta dalla carica di reggente che Giorgio Rodocanacchi ebbe nella Banca di Sconto almeno tra 1843 e 1845: la fonte non permette di stabilire quando il suo incarico iniziò. Si trattava di un istituto avviato nel settembre 1836 dopo ripetuti tentativi falliti[27], per scontare cambiali commerciali utilizzando emissioni fiduciarie, con una partecipazione di 2 milioni di lire toscane da parte dello stato. Serviva quindi a fornire liquidità aggiuntiva ai commercianti per lo sconto

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[25] *NGCC 1843*, NGCC 1845, *NGCC 1847*, *NGCC 1855*, *Meozzi 1858*, *Meozzi 1860*, *Meozzi 1865*, *Meozzi 1867*, *Meozzi 1872*, *Meozzi 1873*, *Meozzi 1876*, *Meozzi 1877*. *Meozzi 1880* non indica più assicuratori indipendenti. La natura della fonte non permette di stabilire, ovviamente, se realmente le date indicate corrispondessero a quelle di inizio e fine dell'attività assicurativa.

[26] Michele Reggio aveva rilevato l'attività commerciale di Michele Rodocanacchi, come si è detto; un Demetriadi ne era stato l'ultimo socio.

[27] David G. LoRomer, *Merchant and reform in Livorno 1814-1868*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 1987, pp. 138-140. Sul faticoso avvio, ivi, pp. 141-142.

delle cambiali con cui regolavano i pagamenti e aiutava nel caso di una temporanea crisi[28]. Nel 1847 Giorgio Maurogordato fu nominato censore (carica in precedenza attribuita a Michele Rodocanacchi). Diventò reggente tra 1849 e 1858[29], appena conclusa la fase di gravi difficoltà che accompagnarono la rivolta del 1848 e la massiccia conversione dei biglietti della banca in monete metalliche. Il prolungato esercizio della carica sembra un implicito segno dell'importanza della sua ditta nella circolazione delle tratte e dell'attendibilità delle valutazioni sulle firme che era in grado di fare grazie all'ampiezza delle sue relazioni d'affari, ma anche del prestigio e della fiducia di cui godeva tanto presso il governo toscano quanto presso la comunità commerciale livornese. L'entità di quel lavoro fu, probabilmente tale, che l'annuario livornese del 1858 registrò per la prima volta la ditta anche come banca, confermando la definizione nel 1860[30]. Cresceva intanto il numero delle banche private attive in città, segno dell'incremento delle operazioni dipendenti dal commercio e dalle opportunità legate all'unificazione. Cresceva l'esigenza di rafforzare la struttura bancaria esistente per assorbire più facilmente le insolvenze di singoli operatori ed evitare le crisi, assicurando l'iniezione di liquidità aggiuntiva; occorreva mobilitare maggiori risorse per affrontare programmi d'investimento infrastrutturale più ambiziosi e raccordare meglio Livorno e Firenze, i due centri finanziari del Granducato. L'Unificazione aggiunse la necessità di integrare il sistema bancario toscano nel più ampio contesto nazionale, dove esistevano operatori con risorse maggiori e progetti ambiziosi. La prospettiva di finanziare l'ingente debito pubblico nazionale e i programmi di investimento che accompagnavano la costruzione dello stato unitario metteva in evidenza l'opportunità di stabilire regolari rapporti con le grandi banche d'investimento internazionali, francesi o britanniche. Giorgio Maurogordato fu coinvolto in questo processo, con un ruolo che non fu limitato a Livorno e alla Toscana. La fondazione della Banca Nazionale Toscana attraverso la fusione delle 2 banche di sconto di Livorno e Firenze,

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[28] *NGCC 1843*, *NGCC 1845*. Michele Rodocanacchi, della ditta Francesco Rodocanacchi, era uno dei 3 censori della Cassa.

[29] *NGCC 1849*, *NGCC 1855*, *NGCC 1858*. Nel 1858 tra i reggenti della Banca di Sconto ci era anche un altro esponente della comunità di mercanti greci impegnati nel commercio di grano, Giovanni Pappudoff.

[30] *NGCC* 1860; la banca ha lo stesso indirizzo di scali delle Farine 3 che valeva dal 1822 per la sede della società commerciale.

nel 1857, rispondeva a esigenze analoghe e mobilitò, nel corso degli anni, risorse maggiori svolgendo la funzione di istituto di emissione. Il suo capitale iniziale di 8 milioni l'autorizzava a mettere in circolazione il triplo di quella somma. Dopo l'Unificazione divenne una delle sei banche di emissione attive in Italia fra 1870 e 1893, rimanendo sacrificata dalla dimensione regionale conservata troppo a lungo e da una gestione poco oculata causata dagli stretti rapporti con esponenti del mondo finanziario e politico fiorentino. Entro il 1873 una quota consistente dei suoi crediti risultava immobilizzata; il risanamento impose una gestione prudente che ne limitò l'incisività. Giorgio Maurogordato fu nominato direttore della sede di Livorno della Banca per designazione della Camera di Commercio livornese nel 1860, in un momento reso delicato dall'Unificazione[31]; sarà nuovamente direttore supplente della sede, nominato dagli azionisti, tra 1872 e 1875, in una fase di difficoltà per gli immobilizzi di cui l'istituto soffriva.

Partecipò anche alla fondazione della Banca Toscana di Credito per l'Industria e il Commercio di Firenze[32], anch'essa istituto di emissione, ma con capitale minore della Banca Nazionale Toscana. Era promossa e diretta da Pietro Bastogi che gestiva con oculatezza il finanziamento di progetti infrastrutturali e industriali.

Alcune iniziative a cui Giorgio Maurogordato partecipò non ebbero successo. Nel settembre 1863, per esempio, fu tra i fondatori della Cassa Nazionale di Sconto Toscana, che riuniva soci appartenenti al mondo bancario di Torino, Milano, Firenze, Livorno, Parigi e Francoforte per sottoscrivere un capitale di 10 milioni di lire in 40.000 azioni, e che non ebbe vita durevole[33].

Ebbe un ruolo anche nella Banca Nazionale nel Regno d'Italia, il maggiore istituto di emissione nazionale, legato al governo e ai circoli finanziari di Torino e Genova. Fu presidente del consiglio di amministrazione della filiale livornese quando fu aperta. In seguito fu

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[31] *NGCC 1860*. Gli subentrò il barone Teodoro Tossizza, rimasto in carica almeno fino al 1867. *NGCC 1865*, *NGCC 1867*.

[32] M. Sanacore, *La saga*, cit., p. 89.

[33] *Meozzi 1865*, *Meozzi 1867*; *Cassa Nazionale di Sconto di Toscana*, Firenze, 1863 (autorizzazioni, modifiche dello statuto, statuto, elenco dei promotori e sottoscrittori), pp. 29, doc. digitalizzato su Google libri, 29 ottobre 2013.

membro del locale consiglio di amministrazione fra 1873 e 1879[34], una conferma dell'influenza e del prestigio di cui godeva nella comunità d'affari livornese, ma anche della sua capacità di non farsi imprigionare nelle rivalità dei gruppi di interesse che si affrontavano attraverso le banche controllate.

Partecipò anche alla fondazione della Banca Generale di Roma nel 1871, uno dei due istituti di credito mobiliare dell'Italia postunitaria, impegnato a sostenere alcune delle principali industrie italiane e in particolare la siderurgia, la Società per le Strade Ferrate Meridionali, alcune aziende romane impegnate nel decennio 1880 nello sviluppo urbano di Roma capitale. Dal 1881 la Banca ottenne l'affitto triennale delle miniere di ferro dell'Elba; nel 1885 Mauro Maurogordato, figlio di Giorgio, ne ottenne l'appalto dalla Società Veneta e dalla Banca Generale[35]. Probabilmente i rapporti tra i Maurogordato e la Banca Generale contribuirono ad avviare quelli tra istituti bancari romani e imprese livornesi, che emersero nella crisi bancaria di Livorno del 1891 e negli sviluppi locali della crisi bancaria nazionale del 1893-1894.

Non sembra invece che Giorgio Maurogordato partecipasse alla fondazione della Banca di Livorno nel 1873, diversamente da diversi banchieri e commercianti-banchieri locali. Sei fra loro (Pietro Fehr Schmöle, Angiolo Rignano, Salvadore Palau, Raffaello Rosselli, Angiolo Uzielli, Giorgio Wassmuth) e due banchieri di Firenze, ma legati a Livorno (Moisé Bondi e Teofilo Levi) si allearono con il commerciante Carlo Bacigalupo di Genova (che rappresentava anche il commerciante e deputato Francesco Casaretto) e Niccolò Delle Piane, direttore della S. A. Banca di Genova e in

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[34] *Meozzi 1872*; *Meozzi 1873*; *Meozzi 1876*; *Meozzi 1877*; *Meozzi 1879.* Presidente della filiale livornese della Banca Nazionale era, nel 1873, Giacomo Dewitt che ricopriva contemporaneamente la carica di camerlingo nella Camera di Commercio e membro nella sua commissione di vigilanza.

[35] L'8 agosto 1885 Matteo Maurogordato e Silvestro Tesei furono nominati procuratori speciali dell'impresa Miniere dell'Isola d'Elba e Fonderie di Ferro in Toscana avendo stabilito una rappresentanza a Livorno e volendola munire delle necessarie facoltà di ordinaria gestione. Sono autorizzati a tutti gli atti di amministrazione inerenti all'impresa. Matteo Maurogordato può firmare gli atti di consegna e riconsegna degli inventari e relativi allegati riflettenti l'affitto delle miniere. L'atto è disposto dalla Società Veneta imprese e costruzioni pubbliche e dalla Banca Generale. Archivio storico della Camera di Commercio Agricoltura e Industria di Livorno, *Circolari 1807-1920*, n 94. I poteri attribuiti a M. Maurogordato erano più estesi di quelli di Silvestro Tesei.

rappresentanza di altri 4 sottoscrittori[36]. L'alleanza rifletteva probabilmente una valutazione ottimistica da parte dei Genovesi delle opportunità offerte dal rapporto organico con una piazza commerciale importante; per i Livornesi l'istituto poteva promuovere iniziative fuori della portata dei singoli o troppo rischiose, che era più sicuro affrontare attraverso una società anonima e ripartendo i rischi, motivazione alla base di molte iniziative bancarie in quegli anni. La banca, complice il peggioramento della situazione congiunturale seguito all'euforia dei primi anni del decennio 1870, fu presto ridimensionata: i Genovesi cedettero le loro partecipazioni e la banca ridusse il capitale da 3 a 2 milioni di cui 1 solo versato. Non riuscì a sviluppare un consistente sconto di cambiali, anche perché le banche private sulla piazza di Livorno continuavano ad essere relativamente numerose; per rimediare si impegnò in operazioni finanziarie e in qualche credito industriale, non sempre vantaggioso. Cercò di sviluppare rapporti di corrispondenza con banche maggiori[37] e la Banca Romana la utilizzò, fra 1884 e 1887 per gestire la liquidazione della ditta Modigliani Fratelli, attiva nel settore minerario e forestale. Tra 1888 e 1891, inoltre, l'istituto livornese fu costretto a partecipare alle operazioni consorziali promosse dalla Banca Nazionale nel Regno d'Italia per ripartire su più banche gli immobilizzi della Società dell'Esquilino, per tentarne il salvataggio. Giorgio Maurogordato fu eletto amministratore della Banca nel 1882 e mantenne la carica fino alla morte nel 1886: si può ipotizzare che lo inducessero a questo passo gli impegni che stava assumendo contemporaneamente con i fratelli Corradini, per persuadere diversi banchieri privati e commercianti livornesi, azionisti e amministratori dell'istituto, a seguirlo.

Probabilmente Giorgio Maurogordato individuò le ferrovie prima delle banche come strumento di investimenti profittevoli e di arricchimento, anche se era ben noto che l'appoggio di una banca agevolava efficacemente il collocamento dei titoli ferroviari. Partecipò

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[36] Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio, Direzione generale del credito e della previdenza, Industrie, banche e società, b. 217, fasc. 1366-1368, *Banca di Livorno*.

[37] La Banca Generale, per es., rappresentò la Banca Livornese nel 1885 alla sottoscrizione del capitale della Società delle Strade Ferrate Meridionali. La Banca sottoscrisse azioni per 810.000 lire, lo 0,6% del totale, forse per ricollocarle tra la propria clientela. Lisa Goitom, Francesca Pino, *Ferrovie per l'Italia Unita. Origine e sviluppo della Rete Mediterranea nell'Archivio Storico Mittel 1885-1905*, Milano, Hoepli, 2011, p. 59.

probabilmente già nel decennio 1850 alle sottoscrizioni di titoli ferroviari quando fu organizzato il primo complesso di quattro linee ferroviarie granducali che davano alla Toscana un ruolo fondamentale nella possibile estensione delle ferrovie dal Settentrione verso il centro e il sud. Fu amministratore della Società della Strada Ferrata Leopolda nel 1855 e 1858[38], la principale linea toscana. Nel 1860-1865, fu membro del consiglio di amministrazione delle Strade Ferrate Livornesi, con sede a Firenze[39]. Forse partecipò alla sottoscrizione a Livorno delle 40.900 azioni della Società Italiana per le Strade Ferrate Meridionali, su 200.000 totali, nel 1862, che aiutarono Pietro Bastogi a riunire 100 milioni con cui formare una società ferroviaria esclusivamente italiana che sottraesse ai Rothschild la concessione per costruire ed esercitare le linee ferroviarie che dovevano unire quelle lombarde ed emiliane (di cui loro avevano già la concessione) con Napoli da Ancona. Quando fu realizzata la fusione, nel 1865, delle ferrovie toscane con le romane, cercò di attenuare il contrasto d'interessi fra il gruppo di investitori toscani e la Société Générale de Crédit Industriel che aveva una larga partecipazione nella società delle strade ferrate pontificie; divenne consigliere della società Strade ferrate romane, sezione nord[40], con sede a Firenze, sotto la presidenza e la direzione di Tommaso Mangani, a fianco di diversi esponenti della finanza toscana tra cui spiccava Carlo Fenzi.

Giorgio Maurogordato e soprattutto il figlio Matteo parteciparono alla riprivatizzazione delle ferrovie realizzata nel 1885, dopo oltre un decennio di esercizio statale che aveva cercato di rimediare alle inefficienze della gestione privata. Essi contribuirono alla formazione del capitale della Società per le strade Ferrate del Mediterraneo che rilevò una parte consistente della rete ferroviaria nazionale, nel 1885. Sottoscrissero 2.835.000 lire (2,1%) per la ditta Rodocanacchi; 1.080.000 (0,8%) in proprio, oltre, probabilmente, a agevolare la decisione della Banca di Livorno di sottoscrivere 810.000 lire, anche se l'istituto fu rappresentato nell'occasione da Enrico Rava della Società Generale, come si è detto[41]. Grazie a quella partecipazione Matteo Maurogordato entrò nel primo consiglio di amministrazione della società. Quasi contemporaneamente fu promossa la

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[38] *NGCC 1855*, *Meozzi 1858*.

[39] *Meozzi 1860*; *Meozzi 1865*.

[40] *Meozzi 1872*; *Meozzi 1873*.

[41] L. Goitom, F. Pino, *Ferrovie per l'Italia Unita* cit., pp. 57-59, 86; era di 135 milioni il capitale sottoscritto alla costituzione della Società.

Società Italiana per le Strade ferrate della Sicilia a cui furono affidati in gestione i 599 km di ferrovie dell'isola per almeno 20 anni, riconoscendole condizioni finanziarie più favorevoli rispetto alle due società concessionarie delle reti ferroviarie peninsulari. Alla costituzione della società parteciparono la ditta Rodocanacchi, la Ditta Marsaglia di Torino e la Banca Depositi e Sconti di Catania[42].

L'attenzione per finanza e ferrovie rivelava la consapevolezza di dover affiancare nuove attività a quella commerciale (e alle sue appendici assicurative e bancarie) perché erano cambiate le condizioni in cui si era consolidata la fortuna dei Rodocanacchi e Maurogordato. Il cambiamento fu sottolineato con nettezza nel 1879 quando arrivarono a scadenza i termini stabiliti per la durata della ditta internazionale Rodocanacchi Figli e C. e si sciolse la rete di collaborazioni e cointeressenze che ne aveva unito i soci, dalla Russia alla Gran Bretagna, per almeno 60 anni. Si staccarono dalla ditta Theodor Rodocanacchi di Odessa, che era la chiave di volta dell'intera struttura, Paolo e Théodore Rodocanacchi di Marsiglia, la ditta Rodocanacchi Figli e C. di Londra, P[aolo o Pandeli?] Rodocanacchi di Parigi, N. A, Scanavi di Rostov[43]. La loro unione era stata uno strumento decisivo per il successo del loro commercio. I cambiamenti intervenuti nel suo svolgimento avevano accentuato le spinte all'autonomia dei diversi nuclei familiari e si era anche modificata la posizione dei commercianti greci in Russia, orientandoli verso investimenti e attività diverse, com'è già stato osservato.

Forse a Livorno i cambiamenti cominciarono ad essere avvertibili quasi contemporaneamente al processo di unificazione nazionale e si sovrapposero agli effetti della soppressione del porto franco che è tradizionalmente interpretata come causa fondamentale di una prolungata decadenza della città, trascurando l'incidenza degli altri fattori in gioco. Il grano aveva sostenuto il traffico del porto di Livorno per circa cinque decenni dalla fine delle guerre napoleoniche e la sua contrazione non dipendeva dalla perdita delle agevolazioni tariffarie. Per quanto riguarda le

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[42] Antonio Papa, *Classe politica e intervento pubblico nell'età giolittiana. La nazionalizzazione delle ferrovie*, Napoli, Guida, 1973, p. 29.

[43] Si tratta probabilmente di Nicolaj Alexandrovič Skanavi, che nel 1880 sposò a Rostov Alexandra, figlia di Zannis Scaramanga. V. la genealogia parziale di Zannis Scaramanga di Emmanuel, nato a Chios nel 1815 e morto a Rostov nel 1900, ricostruita da Christopher Long in http://christopherlong.co.uk/gen/maximogen/fg03/fg03_410.html, (cons. 19 dicembre 2020).

vicende della ditta Rodocanacchi Figli e C. i cambiamenti corrisposero alla crescita di responsabilità e visibilità di Matteo Maurogordato, il primogenito di Giorgio. L'avvicendamento alla guida della ditta era stato preparato con cura negli anni 1870 e fu realizzato apparentemente senza scosse. È esemplare la successione tra padre e figlio nel consiglio di amministrazione della filiale di Livorno della Banca Nazionale nel Regno d'Italia nel 1880[44], lo stesso anno in cui la ditta Rodocanacchi Figli e C. non era più ricordata fra le banche private livornesi.

La frantumazione della costruzione societaria internazionale impose la formazione di una nuova ditta, attiva dall'inizio del 1880. Giorgio e Matteo Maurogordato con Pandeli Rodocanacchi la costituirono con identica ragione sociale, per continuare lo stesso tipo di affari della precedente, ma precisando che non aveva alcun rapporto con ditte anche dello stesso nome attive in Italia o all'estero. Tutti e tre i soci avevano diritto di firma. Nel marzo 1883 Giorgio Maurogordato, principale rappresentante della ditta, autorizzava Emanuele di Pandeli Rodocanacchi a rappresentare la ditta in qualunque occorrenza riconoscendogli pieno diritto di firma. Nell'ottobre 1887 Matteo Maurogordato fu Giorgio e Emanuele Rodocanacchi fu Pandeli davano la rappresentanza congiunta della ditta a Emanuele fu Teodoro Sechiari e a Gustavo fu Angiolo Molfino, i collaboratori di fiducia di Matteo Maurogordato, segnalando che la gestione della ditta non costituiva più l'occupazione fondamentale dei soci. Nell'aprile 1887 Matteo Maurogordato ed Emanuele Rodocanacchi costituirono la Società Commerciale Maurogordato-Rodocanacchi, registrata nel settembre dello stesso anno. I due dichiaravano di aver formato una società in nome collettivo, Rodocanacchi Figli e C., col capitale di 1,5 milioni, sede a Livorno e firma di ciascuno dei soci, per affari di commercio e di banca. 3/5 del capitale erano stati versati da Maurogordato, 2/5 da Rodocanacchi. La ditta fu liquidata due anni dopo, nel giugno 1889. In quell'occasione fu stabilito che Emanuele Rodocanacchi avrebbe potuto commerciare sotto la vecchia ragione sociale di Ditta Rodocanacchi figli & C. tanto in proprio che in società con altri. La ditta fu liquidata da Matteo Maurogordato, che fondò poche settimane dopo la Ditta Figlio di G. Maurogordato insieme con il fratello Michele, residente a Londra, banchiere, accomandatario con un capitale di 125.000 lire e responsabile solo per il capitale sottoscritto, mentre Matteo era accomandante,

[44] *Meozzi 1880* e *Meozzi 1881*; in quell'anno Francesco Mimbelli era censore nell'istituto.

rappresentante e responsabile impegnando un capitale di 375.000 lire. La ditta avrebbe svolto operazioni di banca. La società fu sciolta e liquidata dopo la perdita dell'intero capitale nel maggio 1892[45]. Probabilmente servì come strumento per trasferire risorse dalla famiglia a Matteo quando accettò di addossarsi una parte delle perdite prodotte dalla crisi della Raffineria degli zuccheri di Ancona in cui era interessato a fianco dei fratelli Corradini. E forse servì anche a trasferire da un fratello all'altro, senza responsabilità in quel fallimento, una quota di proprietà del palazzo Maurogordato. La caduta intervenuta nel 1891 fu tanto più clamorosa per i riconoscimenti che Matteo Maurogordato aveva conseguito nei circa 20 anni precedenti. Uno dei primi fu la carica di console del Belgio, attestata tra 1872 e 1881[46]. Parallelamente si impegnò nella costruzione di una carriera politica che suo padre non aveva perseguito[47]. Nel 1878 ottenne la cittadinanza italiana, nonostante fosse nato a Marsiglia. Tra 1879 e 1881 divenne membro del Consiglio provinciale e della Deputazione provinciale[48]. Nel 1880 entrò nell'Associazione costituzionale livornese, di cui era presidente l'influente industriale Florestano de Larderel; e l'anno successivo ne divenne vicepresidente[49]. La carriera politica di Matteo Maurogordato si concluse in Parlamento, eletto nel 1890 nella larga maggioranza crispina. Dovette dimettersi a causa del suo coinvolgimento nel disastroso esito della Raffineria degli Zuccheri di Ancona.

Questa fu l'iniziativa forse più innovativa tentata dai Maurogordato che decisero, verosimilmente intorno al 1881-1882 di appoggiare un ambizioso progetto industriale del commerciante svizzero immigrato a Livorno entro il 1858, Giovanni Corradini e del fratello Giacomo. I due

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[45] Archivio storico della Camera di Commercio Agricoltura e Industria di Livorno, Circolari 1807-1920, nn. 143, 2592, 1880.

[46] *Meozzi 1872*, *Meozzi 1873*, *Meozzi 1877*, *Meozzi 1879*, *Meozzi 1880*, *Meozzi 1881*. Probabilmente la carica durò anche dopo il 1881, ma non è stato possibile disporre di annuari di Livorno compresi fra quell'anno e il 1896. Giovanni Corradini, suo socio in affari, divenne console della Svizzera nel 1879, sostituendo Fehr Schmöle, a lungo titolare dell'incarico.

[47] Giorgio Maurogordato fu uno degli 8 membri della commissione amministratrice gratuita dell'Ospedale di Livorno, tra 1867 e 1880 dopo la riforma dell'assistenza realizzata nel 1865 Presidente della Commissione era Florestano de Larderel; Maurogordato fu vicepresidente nel 1879. Fu consigliere comunale e membro della Commissione consultiva permanente del consiglio comunale di Livorno per la finanza almeno nel 1879-1881. *Meozzi 1867*, *Meozzi 1872*, *Meozzi 1873*, *Meozzi 1876*, *Meozzi 1879*, *Meozzi 1880*,

[48] *Meozzi 1879*, *Meozzi 1880*, *Meozzi 1881*.

[49] *Meozzi 1880*, *Meozzi 1881*.

fratelli, trasferitisi dalla cittadina di Sent, nei Grigioni, avevano dato vita a un floridissimo commercio all'ingrosso di coloniali, un'attività relativamente comune per un porto come Livorno dove zucchero, the e caffè arrivavano tradizionalmente da Francia, Gran Bretagna e Olanda. Inoltre avevano impiantato una distilleria di rum, essenziale per la produzione del "ponce", la bevanda alcoolica calda tipica di Livorno. La novità del loro commercio consistette nell'affiancare la fornitura dei prodotti che importavano ai commercianti al dettaglio, dalla Toscana alla Campania, ad un forte impegno diretto nello smercio al dettaglio dei prodotti attraverso caffè e pasticcerie di proprietà, eventualmente affidati alla gestione di compartecipanti (come avvenne per una grande birreria). La formula consentiva di lucrare su un valore aggiunto più alto dei prodotti che offrivano. Evidentemente i fratelli Corradini avevano lucidamente intuito le potenzialità di una domanda di consumi ormai consistente in centri urbani relativamente agiati e dove la pratica della villeggiatura estiva faceva regolarmente aumentare la domanda. Probabilmente in base all'esperienza di questa struttura commerciale i fratelli Corradini, tra 1881 e 1882 concepirono il progetto di costituire una raffineria di zucchero ad Ancona, porto adriatico in grave crisi, dove il Comune fu convinto, nel 1883-1884 a cedere in comodato l'ampio lazzaretto per la fabbrica e a fornire l'acqua necessaria al processo industriale per avere dei vantaggi in termini di occupazione. L'operazione poteva beneficiare di costi di produzione favorevoli e poteva valersi delle melasse provenienti dall'Ucraina e dall'Europa centrale, via Trieste. Ottennero l'appoggio di Giorgio e Matteo Maurogordato che persuasero i Rodocanacchi, i Mimbelli e diversi altri esponenti del commercio e della banca di Livorno di assecondare l'iniziativa. Vi furono immobilizzati capitali molto consistenti, scommettendo su una produzione molto alta per il mercato italiano e su un regime doganale protezionistico molto favorevole. Ma la scelta fu improvvida perché dovettero scontrarsi con il principale zuccherificio italiano, la Società Ligure-Lombarda di Genova, che riuscì a impedire al nuovo concorrente di vendere la quantità di zucchero che avrebbe permesso di abbattere i costi di produzione realizzando economie di scala. Per procurarsi disponibilità finanziarie che permettessero di proseguire Giovanni Corradini si impegnò in un vorticoso giro di cambiali (alcune delle quali contraffatte), finché nel marzo 1891, si suicidò non vedendo vie d'uscita. Anche perché la situazione finanziaria italiana si aggravava rapidamente con il peggioramento delle quotazioni

del debito pubblico collocato all'estero, il cedimento del cambio della lira e l'aumento degli immobilizzi delle maggiori banche nazionali, tutte in crisi o crollate fra 1893 e 1894.

Franò l'intera costruzione industriale e finanziaria del ramo livornese delle famiglie Maurogordato e Rodocanacchi e degli altri banchieri e commercianti con cui erano associati nella Banca di Livorno e nelle iniziative industriali e finanziarie avviate negli anni 1880. Con quel crollo finì ogni prospettiva di difendere un ruolo significativo di Livorno come piazza finanziaria di qualche importanza per il commercio internazionale di fine 800 e fu drasticamente ridimensionata l'attività di banchieri-mercanti che avevano prosperato in passato. L'economia locale sarebbe ripartita dopo un decennio circa grazie a scelte industriali compiute da investitori diversi dai mercanti banchieri e in settori diversi da quelli che loro avevano individuato, mentre le nuove banche miste sul modello tedesco prendevano il posto dei banchieri privati.

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About the European vocation. Comparative study Romania - Western Balkans

Dorin-Mircea Dobra

Introduction

There is no need to argue about the need for European integration of the states and peoples of the Balkan Peninsula. Today, therefore, the area is an integral part of the continent and is in the attention and interests of the European Union, the actual process of joining the union is more difficult than anywhere. While all states in the former communist bloc are EU members, the six Balkans countries are still in different stages of negotiations. By comparing historical, seemingly concomitant and similar developments, we sought to demonstrate that differences in options and influences shaped different ideals, realities and vocations. The European vocation of the Balkan peoples and states can be discussed only in terms of its intensity, because through its geographical location and historical evolution, this part of the continent belongs historically and is destined for modern European construction.

Starting from the Romanian experience of Europeanization, in the Balkan context, respectively from the aspects that include it in the regional context, as well as the configurations that individualize it. Compared to the whole region, we will try during this paper to draw at least some lines that can explain the situation today. For this, we need continuous reporting to the experiences of the states that form the heart of the Balkan region, considering that local historical experience can provide us with relevant explanations for the general perspective of European integration, and more specifically, the process of (possible) Europeanization of the Balkans.

Up-to-date radiography of the extended region, which in the German vision until World War II, was known as "South-West Europe", namely the one that brings together the countries of the North Danube (Romania, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) provides only data that can be premises of our study: the Balkan states today are comprised of a cordon of Member States of the European Union, on the south eastern side naming Greece to the South, Bulgaria to the Southeast, Romania to the East, Hungary to the North, Slovenia and Croatia in the Northwest.

Suddenly, the situation in the Western Balkans becomes a special one, as long as the designated territory is the only one (outside Norway and Iceland) not integrated in the contemporary European construction, although it is an integral part of the European continent, it is surrounded by EU states, it is situated on the trade routes of the Union and it is assimilated as an integral part of the European world.

We are undoubtedly in a position to assess the European realities and perspectives of the whole area, in the light of consistent pro-integration arguments: at a first holistic view of the Union area, the Western Balkans stand as an almost inexplicable shortcoming; moreover, the non-membership in the Union of a space of consistent size, brings shortcomings of all kinds, economic, institutional, security, the latest evidence being the immigration wave of 2015-2016, which demonstrated gaps and vulnerabilities in the EU's ability to control the its borders, precisely because of the non-belonging of this area to the community space.

We therefore have sufficient reasons for the theory of the need for European integration in the Western Balkans. However, the obstacles to this route remain to be assessed, as long as all the other states behind the Iron Curtain are now integrated into the European Union, and the few Balkan states are only now experiencing the long road to European integration, led by Serbia and Muntenegru, while the others are at the beginning of the negotiations. Evaluations of the European route can take the path of regional approaches, which has proved to be as complicated as it is necessary. The amalgam of ethnicities, populations, religions, borders and options, makes the approach to be continuously nuanced, and the final objective, that of creating an integrated area, to be lost sight of.

Precisely for these reasons, we decided to approach the chance of the Europeanization of the Balkans from the historical angle, drawing a parallel with the orientations and processes in the history of Romania, never forgetting the specifics and, at the same time, the complexity of the Balkans. "For this reason alone (the Balkans as the origin of World War II – n.n.), since then the Balkans have been considered cursed in the European consciousness, only those loyal to one or another of the small nations have continued to argue that worth supporting. Even fewer have tries to argue

that they should not be judged by the paradigm of Western culture, but understood according to their own characteristics."[50]

Starting precisely from the mentioned quote, not accidentally chosen, we start in our approach regarding the Europeanism that can be the basis for the Europeanization of the Balkans, in order to evaluate, comparatively, Romania's progress towards European integration throughout its own history. And if today, Romania's position on the chosen path can stand, if not as a model, at least as an example, we will seek to address the elements of depth that brought it to this position, and, by comparison, whether they can be found in history or Balkan sap. Because, if not, they can be just as explanations for the given situation.

a. About that Balkanian Romania

In order to be able to explain destiny similarities, or, on the contrary, historical differences between distinct states or regions, we will have to answer a simple question, namely whether "Romania belongs geographically to the Balkan area, is it assimilated to it, at least as a historical evolution?" The answer, of course, lies in a complicated geographical equation, which, looking at it from an increasing distance, we can see that assimilating the country north of the Danube and west of the Black Sea, the area known as the "Balkans". "The truth is that even the outlines of these mysterious lands on the border between two continents are obscure. Many intellectuals have claimed that the Danube marks the northern border of the peninsula. However, this theory would exclude Romania, a country that appears not only in most studies of the Balkans, but also in its own histories of the peninsula, although Bucharest is not too eager to be assimilated with its southern neighbours.[51] A question of self-evaluation, therefore, on the part of the Romanians, which has deep roots in historiographical research: "By this time, (1877 - the Russo-Turkish war, n.n.) a handful of geographers had already extended the term to the whole region, more than a misconception that the Balkan chain stretched along

[50] Mark, Mazower, *The Balkans from the end of Byzantium to the present day*, Humanitas P.H., Bucharest, 2019, p. 36.

[51] Misha Glenny, *The Balkans – Nationalism, war and the great powers,* Bucharest, Trei PH, 2020, p. 22;

the peninsula in south eastern Europe, as the Pyrenees border the north of the Iberian Peninsula.[52]

Nothing is certain, therefore, especially since things are not clear about the populations in the area either; possibly, which, moreover, we emphasize from now on, the destiny, historical and geographical similarities, can be considered as unifying. At its height, the Roman Empire included more than half of the Black Sea coastline, from the Dniester in the northwest, across Thrace and Anatolia, to the Caucasus in the east."[53]. As for the people in the area, as I said, things are at least as complicated. "But as the local people certainly knew, these boundaries were never as clear as they might seem (...) Sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish the conqueror from the subdued."[54]

At least at that time, that of the Roman Empire, things are, therefore, quite nuanced. But what seems significant here is the similarity of events (and approximate, we will see!), Due to the occupation of the same area of geographical interest for conquering peoples or civilizations. For, and probably hence the identity of assimilation, both the northern part of the Danube, at the mouth of the Black Sea and the entire Balkan Peninsula came at that time in the direct interest of the Roman Empire. Stretching north of the Danube to the Carpathian arch, the Roman occupation put the Balkans and the Carpathians under the same type of culture and civilization. Hence, the historiographical similarity between the areas discussed, an argument sufficient for the assimilation of today's Romania to the "Balkan area".

With this clarification comes the first nuance: if the eastern Mediterranean area has been under Roman occupation since the second century BC, today's area of Romania has the same fate only in the second century BC, after the Daco-Roman wars of 101-102 and 105-106: "When the Republic began to expand in the eastern Mediterranean area, in the years 200 BC almost the entire Black Sea region was divided between the independent kingdoms that emerged after the death of Alexander the Great. (...) But in the Black Sea region the power of the Romans was rather symbolic"[55]. We insist on this aspect, because it seems essential to us regarding the so-called "European vocation". Especially since, looking

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[52] Mazower, *op. cit*, p. 22.

[53] Charles King, *The Black Sea - a history*, Bucharest, Polirom Publishing House, 2015, p. 65.

[54] King, *op. cit*, p. 75.

[55] *Ibidem*, p. 65.

analytically today at the Roman experience of the two areas, the Balkans and the Carpathians, at least the premises should put us in the position of being able to say that the Balkan area should be the one with a stronger Roman influence, at least in terms of the period of colonization: for the Balkans the Roman occupation lasted about five centuries, and for the Carpathian area only a century and a half (106 - 165). Enough to be able to say, at least at this moment, that the European experience of the Balkans has been much longer, and therefore even deeper.

Going further in the process of capturing the historical similarities caused by major regional events, we will say that both the Balkans and the Carpathians enter the area of interest of the Ottoman Empire around the same time. "After important preparations, Mehmed II invaded Wallachia, in the spring of 1462, probably in order to annex it. (...) The Wallachian army was still severely defeated, but Mehmed II preferred to keep Wallachia as a vassal, ascending to the throne Radu, the brother of Vlad III the Devil, who had been a hostage at the Gate."[56] In almost fifteen years, the fate of Moldavia would be the same: "This (campaign against Moldavia, n.n.) took place in the spring of 1476. Stephen the Great refused to fight as much as he could, drawing the enemy into unfriendly regions. However, on July 26, he was forced to fight in the White Valley, where the Ottomans defeated him with difficulty."[57] It is important to mention here that Moldovia does not fall under Ottoman rule, but still remains defeated. Without insisting on the historical aspects, we mention the moments when Wallachia and Moldovia enter the attention and coordination of the Ottoman Empire, in order to highlight, again, the similarity of destiny. Around the same time, which lasted until the middle of the 16th century, the Balkan countries were forced to be seen as an integral part of the Empire. But with the mention of the aspect, we have to make the essential specification. The Romanian countries (Wallachia, Moldovia and even less Transylvania) will never become Turkish pachalic, they remain only vassals. And the aspect seems particularly important to us, precisely from the perspective of the consistency of the influence that the administration and automatically the Ottoman culture and civilization exerted in the two

[56] Robert Mantran (coord.), *History of the Ottoman Empire*, Bucharest, Bic All Publishing House, 2001, p. 88.
[57] *Ibidem*, p. 88.

areas of specific influence. "Four other Balkan regions, Transylvania, Moldova, Wallachia and the city of Dubrovnik, had special statutes."[58]

Starting from this reality, of the different interest of the Ottomans towards the North-Danubian lands, we will try to prove that the influences exerted, as well as the connections of the Romanian countries with the Western Europe had a different consistency. But, for the moment, we return to the launch of this section: <u>one by one, in an almost similar and synchronous way, Romania entered with the Balkan area in the attention and the series of historical events.</u> We will see along the way that this trend will be maintained for the modern period, respectively the era of the revolutions of the 19th century, the Balkan and world wars, the Iron Curtain.

The simple reference to the Balkan Pact (1930), in the formation of which the Romanian diplomacy had an initiating role, makes us rethink the assumption of belonging to the area. It is not so much the geographical proximity as the geopolitical and national similarities that have put the few countries under the name of the Balkan initiative. „The Balkan Pact constituted, throughout all the years of the passive activity of the four allied states, an extremely vivacious example, showing the role and the contribution, not deprived of meaning, brought by these small and middle states in the battle for the defense of security, for the protection of peace;(...) it revealed the old friendship traditions and the common battle of the people in the region, by showing the values and their unshakable connections, values and connections that asserted and will always assert in this European space with benign permanence."[59]

Taking into account all these events, we can move on to the necessary assessment: the assimilation of Romania as part of the Balkan area is the result of concomitant historical events, observable throughout the area. As such, any volume dedicated to the Balkans will record necessary references to the Carpathian area, which is often an active agent in the events in the studied region. Today's placement in Romania, north of the Danube, has given the country, along the way, based on a natural border, different perceptions and interests of the Balkans, the late Roman conquest or the autonomy of the Romanian states towards the High Gate, setting an example in this regard. Sufficient reasons, therefore, to intuit the

[58] Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans,* vol. I, Iași, European Institute Publishing House, 2000, p. 96.

[59] Eliza Campus, *Înţelegerea Balcanică*, Acad. RSR Publishing House, Bucharest, 1972, XXIV.

great differences of ethnic structure, the influence and the subsequent evolutions that, today, place the two regions in totally different positions from the European integration. It remains to be seen, however, whether these differences do not have deeper structures.

b. Latinity, Slavism and Islam

Taken as a whole, with a synthetic eye, the history of the formation of peoples can be assimilated to a hydrographic network, with springs, streams, rivers, lakes and seas and oceans that communicate with each other. The mentioned parallel, once applied to Eastern Europe, must necessarily take into account some major currents that have shaped Europe today. We call here Hellenism, Roman civilization, the invasion of Slavic peoples, Byzantine culture and civilization. The Ottoman Empire, the French revolutionary ideology, the world wars and communism, imposed by Russian imperialism, and finally, the modern European construction. The modalities, as well as the consistency of the influences of these great historical events, have shaped and individualized each people of Eastern Europe. As we will show, these individualizations, especially in connection with the two areas chosen as the subject of our paper, are consistent enough to provide realistic explanations for the situation on the ground today.

The ways of mutual assimilation between the cultures of the native and the colonizing peoples belong to the sociological field, in which the processes of acculturation, adaptation and adoption play an essential role. About the way in which the native population (Daco-Getae) from the North-Danubian territory assimilated the Roman culture and civilization during a century and a half (106-265) I showed during another article.[60] We mention here only the extraordinary fact of the formation of the Daco-Roman people speaking a language of Latin origin, preserved until today. This is a particularly important fact in the equation of our comparative study, especially since in the Balkans an essential event comes, later, to put its identity on the populations. ”The Slavs had appeared in the 600s and, until the time of Constantine VII, had established a strong empire in the

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[60] Dorin-Mircea Dobra, “Romania and the rhythms of its modernizations”, *Cogito*, vol. XII, no. 4, December 2020, Bucharest, Prouniversitaria Publishing House, 2020, http://cogito.ucdc.ro/COGITO23decembrie2020.pdf#page=7.

southern Balkans. (...). To the east and south were the Arabs, with armies enlivened by the fervour of their new faith, Islam. "[61] In this way, we already mention the other two phenomena with identity effect in the Balkan area, Slavism and Islam. Present in both the Balkans and the Carpathians, they will influence the two regions differently, for various reasons. In such a way that, this time, Romania will remain an "island of Latinity" in a predominantly Slavic area.

Why the Slavs did not remain on the territory of present-day Romania, so that the influence of their language left more marks than in the ethnicity of the Romanian people, to this question, history has been able to answer quite clearly. What is certain, however, is that the peoples of today's Balkan Peninsula are mostly called Slavs, while the Romanian people are of Romanesque-Latin origin. "We don't have to look too far into history to understand how migration has shaped the ethnic background of the Balkans. (...). Life in the Roman provinces south of the Danube had previously been disrupted by incursions by Germanic tribes and Huns. But these invasions, though frequent and often destructive, were short-lived and usually ended with the departure of the invaders. However, the impact of the Slavic tribes was completely different: over about 200 years, they settled here constantly, in large numbers, (...). Their arrival in the Balkans marked the end of the ancient world and erected a wall between the western and eastern halves of the Roman Empire, which would contribute to the split between Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy."[62] This, while, as I said, in the Romanian territories, and not only, their influence was much reduced. "On the territories of Greece, Albania and Romania, nowadays, the local population has absorbed the Slavic settlers who came to speak the language of the locals. The Slavophones, however, were to settle permanently on a wide strip of land stretching from the Adriatic to the Black Sea."[63] From an ethnic point of view, therefore, things are largely configured until the year 1000, then another important agent, the Ottoman Empire, coming to settle in this area for a long time and leave legacies that today should be more questioned.

What is certain is that none of them ask enough questions about their Ottoman period, nor about its aftermath. "According to this reasoning, the successor states of the Balkans look for their national roots in

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[61] King, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
[62] Mazower, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.
[63] Jelavich, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

the medieval or ancient past and encourage their historians to go through the period of Ottoman rule as soon as possible, because nothing good can have come from those years."[64] Without minimizing the Ottoman influence in today's Romanian territories, evident especially in the two former principalities, Wallachia and Moldova, and less in Habsburg Transylvania, we will emphasize once again the differences in intensity of the model, due to their lack of incorporation in the Ottoman system. "In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, after Moldova and Wallachia came under the control of the Ottoman Empire, they, like Transylvania, were not incorporated into the imperial system, but became autonomous provinces, with their own institutions."[65] From here, and until keeping in touch with the other empires, it was only a step. But this step seems all the more important today from the perspective of the current routes in the service of Europeanization. "As the Ottoman power weakened and external pressure increased, the Romanian rulers and boyars were naturally tempted to take advantage of the situation in their own interest. Although they had always had ties to both the Habsburg Empire and Poland in the eighteenth century, Russia, the great Orthodox power, seemed to offer the greatest hope of help."[66]

Throughout this period, the great currents, inventions, schools, and administrative theories reached the Romanian territories, based on the neighbourhoods and the inherent connections, especially in Transylvania. "On the other hand, these states remained wide open to external influences through contacts with Poland, Hungary, Transylvania and Russia. Thus, the ideas and innovations of the contemporary West had penetrated here. The spread of Protestantism in Transylvania led to the first translations of the Scriptures into Romanian and to the development of this language as a means of literary expression."[67] Emphasizing from now on, the role of Latin in the general process of Europeanization of Romania, compared to the Balkans, we will only say that in the peninsular area both contacts with the European model and the intensity of the Ottoman model were completely different. "The sultan's empire is a multinational state, and its subjects belong to several religions, in addition, it is a state whose leader, whose

[64] Mazower, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
[65] Jelavich, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
[66] Jelavich, *op. cit.*, p. 98.
[67] Mantran, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

dignitaries and whose fundamental law are necessarily Muslim."[68] We are therefore talking about territories administered and led by the Ottomans, as opposed to the Romanian ones. Territories, in which Islamization occurred only partially, a fact demonstrated, precisely for financial reasons, the taxes of non-Muslims in the empire being much higher. Otherwise, however, the influence was profound. "Despite the disappearance of Ottoman rule, the peoples of south-eastern Europe still retain a strong Turkish imprint; (...).

This imprint left on the peoples of Eastern Europe shows the role played by the Turks and the fact that they were the ones who laid the first foundations of a new urban civilization."[69]

Sufficient clues to guess the size of the Ottoman footprint left in the Balkans. Put together again, the two experiences give us the right to issue some conclusions:

- The consecutive experiences, the Roman, the Slavic and the Ottoman, had the character of concomitance for the two geographical areas studied: Balkan and Carpathian;
- Due, first of all, to the geographical location, the intensity of the experiences was profoundly different: as time for the Roman one, as a success for the Slavic one, as traces for the Ottoman one;
- Following these geographical realities, especially the Danube playing an essential role for these individualizations, massive differences between the configurations of the two areas were outlined;
- The fact that the native population assimilated, in Romania at that time, the Slavic population, while in the Balkans the slavophiles became predominant, led to major ethnic differences between the two regions;
- The Ottoman Empire left a much more consistent, even modelling legacy in the Balkans, as opposed to the Carpathians;
- In turn, these realities have shaped totally different ethnic, cultural and ideological bases, which spoke for themselves with the entry into the Great Nineteenth Century;
- Inevitably, the reference to the French revolutionary ideology produced observable, integrative events in the Carpathian area, predominantly ethnic in the Balkans. Assessing the effects of the encounter

[68] *Ibidem*, p. 118.
[69] *Ibidem*, p. 119.

between local and European ideologies, of French origin, will have, as we shall see, essential effects from the perspective of Europeanization.

c. When the "lights" of Europe reach the corners of the continent

Obviously, the signals of state modernization, through democracy, equality and nation-state, of the nineteenth century would reach the two extremities of the continent: the Balkan Peninsula and the Carpathian area. In turn, the Revolution of 1789, and then the Revolution of 1848 sent their signals to this area of Europe, where, as with Western ideals, the goals were the liberation of nations and the formation of nation-sovereign states. "The liberal concept of the nation-state aimed to reconcile the leadership exercised by the ethnic majority with the guarantee of individual rights. (...). Theoretically, it was assumed that the assimilation of the minority by the majority will lead, in the long run, to the homogenization of the population. However, the theory clashed with the political realities of the post-imperial European states, in which tensions, animosities and suspicion between ethnic groups were intense."[70] For the desire for modernization was great, as evidenced by the examples in this regard, but ethnic realities were elements that will prove later, especially in the case of the Balkan states, particularly flammable.

"The Ottoman Empire is inhabited by populations of the most diverse origins and religions, which we can know thanks to censuses.

The Balkan Peninsula, above a rough line from today's Turkish Thrace, crossing Macedonia and passing north of the city of Ianina, is occupied by mostly Bulgarian or Serbian people, Albanian people on the Adriatic coast and Wallachian people, (...). South of this line, in eastern Macedonia, in Thessaly, Epirus and Morea, we find Bulgarians, Greeks, Albanians, Slavs. (...)

In eastern Thrace, according to 15th-century censuses, the village is Turkish, but large cities, such as Adrianople or Constantinople, also have a large Greek population."[71] The Jews and Armenians, also present in Romania are added to all these ethnicities. Only for the Banat and Crișana area, at the 1910 census, when the region still belonged to the Austro-

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[70] Mazower, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-150.
[71] Mantran, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

Hungarian Empire, the ethnic groups present counted besides Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, Ruthenians, Croats and Serbs.[72] But in the other Romanian provinces the ethnic composition was the same, particularly eclectic.

Over the entire ethnic mosaic of the Balkans, we must also add the religious structure of the populations, which, as we have seen, intertwine in the most diverse ways. The Romanians in Transylvania were Catholics, while the others were Orthodox, a similar situation for Serbs, Bosnians and Croats. Moreover, in the Balkans, the same ethnic groups become part of history, partly Muslims, partly Christians. This is also noticeable in the case of the Turkish population, an ethnic-religious mosaic, I would add, over which come, through various vector, Western ideals and ideology.

Here, it is time to point out the primacy of Romania from the perspective of modernization. "Of all the Balkan states, Romania has made the greatest progress. The main industry was food processing, with an emphasis on flour and sugar."[73] The situation was, however, unfortunate for the whole area. "Unfortunately, no state has an economic basis for achieving these goals, industrialization and modernization. First and foremost, there is little domestic capital to be invested in new businesses. The whole peninsula was extremely poor."[74]

A dynamic century, therefore, in which events would follow one another quickly, leaving behind a completely different configuration of the Balkans, and not only. "During the long nineteenth century, which stretched from the French Revolution to the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1923, the political map of the Balkans emerged. The independent states, formed in accordance with the principle of nationality, replaced the empire of 500 years for the so-called successor of the Romans. (...) The First World War was the culmination of the interplay of these liberation struggles in the Balkans with the European state system."[75] And the proof that this first world struggle was just another step towards Balkan destiny was not long in coming. "None of the Balkan nations entered the Great War because it had a special sympathy for either of the other two blocks. But Bulgaria's entry into the war managed to turn the Balkan conflict from an

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[72] *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XVIII, supl. No. 1, 2009, p. 85.

[73] Jelavich, *op. cit.*, vol II, p. 27.

[74] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[75] Mazower, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

extension of Anglo-German or Austro-Russian rivalry into a third Balkan War, in which the warring states did not care who won the global conflict, the Germans or the British, than insofar as victory affects them personally."[76]

All this and only to suggest the Balkan reality, that mosaic of interests, states and religions intertwined in the most unusual ways. Slowly, over the next few years, through the passage of World War II, and then through the fifty years of communism, the great cleavages will deepen. And all this as a result of ideologies, events and phenomena that had their origin in the old Europe, that Western Europe that had managed to send its lights to its last corner. It is just that here in the Balkans the lights were dim...

... And yet! In whose footsteps? (Instead of conclusions)

We have tried, throughout the few pages, in an unexhaustive way, to suggest some premises that today may possibly suggest explanations regarding the pro-European positioning of the Balkan states. Romania's experience was our landmark, the reference to its history, in parallel, being continuously exemplified, precisely to name a few arguments that placed Romania closer to the European model. It is time to synthesize them:

- Although the Carpathian territory benefited from only 150 years of Romanian colonization, unlike the south of the continent, the Latin heritage remained infinitely stronger in the Carpathian area, through the language;
- The language of Latin origin was over time the element of connection with Western culture and civilization, especially with French ideologies, unlike the Balkan area where the languages remained Slavic;
- The geographical positioning of Romania north of the Danube, a river considered a natural border by both Romans, migrants, and Ottomans later, somewhat protected the area from the strong influences registered in the Balkans;
- The special status of the principalities during the Ottoman Empire helped maintain ties with the Western peoples here with a special place with Transylvania, part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and vehicle

[76] Glenny, *op. cit.*, p. 360.

for many of Western ideas and projects, all while the Balkans were part of the Ottoman Empire, had Ottoman leadership and administration, as well as armed troops on their territory;

- In the 19th century, revolutionary ideas suddenly entered these realms, but the different situations in which they found themselves, as well as the collective mentality of the intellectual elite, put the Romanian Countries in a position to adopt, and later adapt, with more depth and rapid Western models, modernization and industrialization.

We are thus in the situation of comparing two areas in which the Ottoman Empire left its imprints in a completely different way, both in mentalities, civilization, and especially ethnic structure: "This imprint left on the peoples of Eastern Europe shows the role played by Turks and the fact that they were the ones who laid the foundations of a new urban civilization. We can say that the Gate played in the structuring of the Balkan urban civilization, the role of the Germans in Slavic and Hungarian Europe."[77] „Eastern Europe", therefore, urban civilization of Turkish origin, etc. And at the level of ethnicities and populations, things are even more complicated. "The four centuries in which the millet system was practiced had left their mark on the Ottoman Empire, creating a complex demographic structure. This explains the confusing mix of ethnicities, beliefs and nationalities that European cartographers encountered in the second half of the 19th century, when they turned their attention to the Balkans. "[78]

From now on, we can assume the main difference between the two areas discussed: the traces left by the almost five centuries of consistent Ottoman rule in the Balkans, at all levels, place the options, projections and hills of this area far different from those of Romania today. This seems, and may even be, the main explanation of the consistently different situations of the two areas regarding their integration in the process of common European construction.

The epilogue of a story that has not even begun: the European integration of the Balkans?

[77] Mantran, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
[78] Glenny, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

The state of any spectator, especially one involved, of the story of the Europeanization of the Balkans must be similar to that of a doctor who has resorted to all medical methods with regard to a patient who is not indifferent, but the result is all unsatisfactory.

We should not even wonder about the European vocation of the Balkan states, as they are an integral part of a continent whose model is too obviously successful to leave room for questioning. However, things about these states are not happy today: tensions are pervasive, aspirations are still fluctuating, realities are still uncertain in the medium term. "In the 1990s, the wars in the former Yugoslavia put the Balkans back on the map of Europe and evoked disturbing memories of the First World War. (...) South-Eastern Europe looked as if it had returned to the previous historical logic of wars for territory and ethnic homogenization. This was the past or the future of Europe?"[79] Herein lies the aberrant equation in which the Balkans are still: while Europe's borders are disappearing, in the Balkans they are not yet unanimously established... so that they can then be abolished.

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[79] Mazower, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

Part III:
The EU's Attitude towards the Western Balkans: Institutional Reform and Strategies for Communication

THE 2020 ENLARGEMENT PACKAGE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS. CASE STUDY: COMMUNICATION ON ENLARGEMENT

Paula A. Mureșan

In 1993, the European Council decided the Copenhagen criteria[1] for countries in order to gain access to the European Union. Conditions to memberships and steps towards joining the UE are in the field of European Commission, the institution that is responsible for the joining process. With 27 member states, the European Union, in the mandate of Jean Claude Juncker, 2014-2019, as president of the European Commission, decided to stop the accession of countries to the EU: "This is why, under my Presidency of the Commission, ongoing negotiations will continue, and notably the Western Balkans will need to keep a European perspective, but no further enlargement will take place over the next five years. With countries in our Eastern neighbourhood such as Moldova or Ukraine, we need to step up close cooperation, association and partnership to further strengthen our economic and political ties."[2]

In 2019, a new President of the European Commission was elected in the person of Ursula von der Leyen and the enlargement perspective has been changed: "There is no question, the Western Balkans belong in the EU. I call on their governments to continue delivering on reforms, particularly on the rule of law, the fight against corruption & guaranteeing media freedom"[3].

The objective of this paper is to analyze how the European Commission communicate on a specific issue, more precisely on an official document, in terms of content, language and formatting.

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[1] For more detalis, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:l14536, accessed: 20.01.2021.

[2] https://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/jean-claude-juncker---political-guidelines.pdf, Jean Claude Juncker, "A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change Political Guidelines for the next European Commission Opening Statement in the European Parliament Plenary Session" Strasbourg, 15 July 2014, p. 11, accessed: 20.01.2021.

[3] Ursula von der Leyen, Twitter, 06.05.2020, accessed: 20.01.2021.

From the methodological point of view, we shall use the qualitative method materialized in the text analysis, meaning primary sources.

It is known that each year the European Commission adopts its "Enlargement package" - a set of documents meant to explain its policy on EU enlargement. What it is important is the fact that this package includes a document - *Communication on enlargement-* which presents the way forward and provides an update on the situation in candidate and potential candidate countries. In addition to the main *Communication*, the package contains the *Reports* on each country.

The Commission presents a detailed annual assessment of the situation in each candidate and potential candidate country, which was carried out over the last year. These assessments go together with recommendations and guidance on the reform priorities.

Moreover, in October 2020, the European Commission adopted *An Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans*- with an amount of more than 3.3 billion euro.[4]

The document I am to analyze is entitled *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions* with a subtitle *2020 Communication on EU enlargement policy* and it was released on the 6th of October 2020, Brussels, in electronic-format, more precisely pdf form and can be found on the website of European Commission, on the page dedicated to the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations.[5] It is assumed by the European Commission, and it is written in English.

It is an official document[6] (it is produced by an administration or a public authority) with direct addressability to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, but with indirect addressability to the candidate and potential candidate countries. In fact, they are the subject of the document: Albania-candidate country, Bosnia and Herzegovina- potential candidate country, Kosovo- potential candidate country, Montenegro- candidate

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[4]https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/countries/package_en, accessed: 20.01.2021.

[5]https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/20201006-communication-on-eu-enlargement-policy_en.pdf, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[6]https://europa.eu/european-union/documents-publications/official-documents_en#european-commission, accessed: 20.02.2021.

country, North Macedonia- candidate country, Serbia- candidate country, Turkey- candidate country.[7]

For sure, the document was expected by the national political environment of each candidate or potential candidate countries because it radiographs the political and social situation in each country. Even more, the importance of the document could also be seen in terms of the fact that the news about the publication of the document was taken over and discussed in European Union member states (e.g., in the Romanian mass media, the news was disseminated from national media sites[8] up to the sites of national development agencies[9] meaning that the concern for a European problem/issue falls within the area of interest of Romanian institutions/public).

The document is made up of a main text and three annexes. The main text is entitled *2020 Communication on EU enlargement policy*. The content of the annexes refers to: ANNEX 1–summaries of the findings of the reports, ANNEX 2 - Implementation of the Western Balkans Strategy and the Sofia Priority Agenda: enhanced EU engagement, (e.g. the six flagships assumed) and ANNEX 3 - Statistical data- (Eurostat and the statistical authorities in Western Balkans and Turkey data concerning demography, labour market, education, national account, balance of payments, external trade in goods, public finance, financial indicators, business, infrastructure, energy, etc.).

As for the text formatting, the bold, bold- italics, underline and bold-underline format is used. Bold is used to highlight the text and capture the readers' attention. Its frequency in the document is limited and with the purpose mentioned above. As for bold-italics, they are used for titles of documents, respecting its standard. The underline is only used for hyperlinks, because it reduces readability, it is hardly used elsewhere, and again in terms of formatting standards, this feature is respected in the

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[7]https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/20201006-communication-on-eu-enlargement-policy_en.pdf, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[8]https://monitorulapararii.ro/raportul-anual-ue-pentru-extindere-oglinda-procesului-de-integrare-al-balcanilor-de-vest-1-33816, https://www.caleaeuropeana.ro/comisia-europeana-a-evaluat-modul-in-care-tarile-din-balcanii-de-vest-si-turcia-pun-in-practica-reformele-fundamentale-si-a-stabilit-recomandari-si-orientari-precise/, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[9]https://adrvest.ro/comisia-europeana-evalueaza-reformele-in-tarile-dornice-sa-adere-la-ue/, accessed: 20.02.2021.

document. As for bold-underline it is used to emphasize the key aspects that are to be presented in the paper.

Another important feature of the document is the intertextuality[10], in terms of using other sources for its elaboration. The meaning attributed to the used texts refers to the fact that those texts come in support of those presented (e.g., decisions, press releases, explanations, Commission communications).[11]

The main text has a structure based on five distinctive parts, one that helps the reader/auditor to understand better the content of the document: *Introduction, the Fundamentals for EU Membership, the Ability to Take on the Obligations of Membership, Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations, Conclusions and Recommendations.*

In the *Introduction*, the focus is on political, economic and strategic support offered by the European Commission to the Western Balkans. Each support is exemplified with detailed aspects. For political support, the Commission adopted proposals to improve the accession process and decided to open accession negotiations with the Republic of Albania and with the Republic of North Macedonia. As for economic support, the Commission offered a package of over EUR 3.3 billion to the assistance of Western Balkans citizens and businesses. The Commission also outlined the main lines of a program dedicated to the green and digital transition (new window) with action for the climate, the circular economy,

[10]Margareta Manu Magda, ”Procedee ale intertextualității în evocarea sensurilor contextuale ale unor antroponime convenționale în spațiul public românesc”, https://onomasticafelecan.ro/iconn2/proceedings/5_12_Manu_Magda_Margareta_ICONN_2.pdf, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[11]https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/20201006-communication-on-eu-enlargement-policy_en.pdf , accessed: 20.02.2021.

Funding allocated within the existing Multi-annual Indicative Program 2014-2020, p. 1, 2020/0065 (COD) Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on providing Macro-Financial Assistance to enlargement and neighborhood partners in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. 22 April 2020, p. 1, Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/568 of 23 April 2020 making the exportation of certain products subject to the production of an export authorisation (OJ L129, 24.4.20), p. 1.

The EU supports better economic governance in the Western Balkans and Turkey through the annual Economic Reform Programme (ERP) process. This has become the key tool for formulating and implementing macroeconomic and structural reforms designed to raise competitiveness and boost growth and job creation. The ERPs process will be adapted to take into account the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, p. 14.

biodiversity and the fight against pollution. The strategic support is carried out in the *Reports* for each country.[12]

In the following three parts, *the Fundamentals for EU Membership, the Ability to Take on the Obligations of Membership, Regional Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations,* the Commission tried to analyze the progress made by each potential or candidate country in relation to the criteria required for EU membership. More precisely, each country is associated to certain fundamental concepts (e.g., judiciary and fundamental rights, fight against corruption, freedom of expression, fight against organized crime, economic criteria, governance reform of public administration, political criteria, ability to assume the obligations of membership and good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation) that measure the progress in reforming the state. Thus, each country received an evaluation in terms of "good progress", "limited progress" and "no progress". Consequently, the European Commission expresses its point of view, offering what we could entitle the "truths" for each country.

To sum up, according to the Commission, the evolution of the protection of the rule of law remained a major problem in the Western Balkans. The Commission noted also a lack of political will and insufficient commitment to the principle of judicial independence. Likewise, the results achieved in the fight against corruption did not meet the requirements for EU membership. Finally, the Commission considered little progress in the field of freedom of expression and media pluralism. If we are to make a top of the countries, Albania and North Macedonia are in the first positions, meaning that their progress in more substantial than of the other countries.

On the other hand, Bosnia and Herzegovina has made little progress in implementing the priorities formulated when applying for membership. Likewise, Kosovo has made little progress in its reforms (Stabilization and Association Agreement (new window) to join the EU. These two states remained potential candidates for the EU.[13]

As for the *Conclusions and Recommendations*, the Commissions insists on what it has done for each country and makes a set of recommendations for future actions.

[12] https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/20201006-communication-on-eu-enlargement-policy_en.pdf, pp. 1-4, accessed: 20.02.2021.

[13] https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/default/files/20201006-communication-on-eu-enlargement-policy_en.pdf, pp. 4-19, accessed: 20.02.2021.

Beyond the coding of the document, meaning the identification of the themes brought into discussion, we shall try to identify the linguistic and rhetorical mechanisms of the document, which will help us to better understand the text and will offer the tone of communication.

In terms of language, we have identified the word groups,- with a high used- frequency in the document- the language is specific to official documents that deal with the Enlargement theme: “Western Balkans region”, “support”, “freedom”, “enlargement”, “reforms”, “implementation”, “development”, “democracy”, “plan”, “partner”, “covid-19”, “challenges”, “coordination”, “standards”, “corruption”, “justice”, “measures”, “framework”, “legislation”, “capacity”, “migration”, “European Union”, “rights”, “amendments”, “internal market”, “pressure”, “terrorism”, “results”.

The adjectives used in the document go on the same note. If they are used in construction with nouns that have a positive effect, they will emphasize the quality of the noun. If the connotation of the noun is negative, then the adjective will have negative valences: “further”, “good”, “serious”, “independence”, “free”, “active”, “limited”, “democratic”, “economic”, “high level”, “essential”, “prepared”, “devastating”.

The verbs used (“to be”, ”to make”, ”to take” ,”to set”, ”to see”, ”to support”, ”to enhance”, ”to continue”, ”to improve”, ”to ensure”, ”to accelerate”, ”to provide”, ”to advance”, ”to protect”, ”to announce”, ”to describe”) are in the active voice, with an explicit subject (countries), highlighting the aspects that took place, specifying the situation in which each country finds itself and making recommendations - the actions to be taken. The valences of information or persuasion of verbs in the document communicate an attitude towards the receiver and therefore the attitude is related to the purpose of the message.

The modal verbs “could” and “should” are frequently used for actions to be taken in the future. The use of the modal verbs is to create a sense of determination, to serve as a call to action, or to point toward theoretical situations. The verb “need” is regularly used for the present or future tense, indicating the necessity or obligation to perform on something.

The role of an adverb is to modify the verbs. This means that they describe the way an action occurs: e.g., “weekly”, ”lively”, ”actively”, ”disproportionately”, ”considerably”, ”increasingly”. Adverbs can also

change adjectives and other adverbs. Often, the purpose of the adverb in the text is to add a degree of strength to the adjective.

As concerns the rhetorical and literary figures such as idioms, allegories, metaphors, similes, and proverbs there are none in the text, due to the fact that the official document must be clear, concise, explicit. The rhetorical elements, as explained above, are an instrument for writers /speakers which permits them to convince their readers and listeners about their point of view. Precision leaves no room for approximation and doubt. This is the rule for an official document.

Conclusions

By definition, an official document belongs to the public domain. In terms of models for communication the analyzed document is a linear one, meaning that its purpose was to inform the public with correct and true evidence. One important feature of official documents is the trend towards transparency. Consequently, the public has open access and it is increasingly easy to consult official documents.

The clarity, another "must" in terms of its characteristics, allows a better understanding of the text. The text must be coherent and unambiguous, which was the situation of the analyzed document.

In general, the readability of a document is confirmed by a cautious choice of vocabulary, by using the lexis of the target addressees, and by a grammar which does not require the reader to make needless memory efforts. The difficulty of the present document in terms of readability comes from the fact that the vocabulary is very specialized and requires specific knowledge. The used vocabulary matches that of the target audience, which is too particular for the unspecialized persons.

Cohesion and coherence are the two features that characterize the document and in terms of layout, the document has an aesthetic design (a clear and clean layout).

For the European Commission, enlargement is an investment in peace, security and economic growth. The Commission stresses that the accession of the Western Balkans is in the interest of the EU. In contrast, negotiations with Turkey which began in 2005 "have stalled" due to "policies opposed to EU interests".

We can affirm that at the discourse level, the document we have analyzed belongs to the inclusive discourse, as the enlargement is seen as a partnership (The Western Balkans are the "privileged partners").

Moreover, there should be a balance in the meaning that the Western Balkans should not be left aside.

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BEYOND WESTERN BALKANS INTEGRATION: SCENARIOS FOR THE EU INSTITUTIONAL AFTERMATH

Radu Albu-Comănescu

Introduction

The article explores the new possibilities for EU reform generated by the new method France (and eight other countries) suggested for future enlargement. The European Union's need to review and make more efficient its institutional framework and decision-making process are well-known and constitute a matter of constant debate since at least the Treaty of Nice – the first to impose substantial changes at the level of EU institutions as enlargement to Central and Eastern European countries has been decided. One question, however, has never been answered: how can the EU work at 33-34 members, once enlargement is completed and matches, more ore less, the geography of the continent. The paragraphs below delve into the possibilities suddenly offered, suggesting that EU reform can unfold in parallel with strategies of inclusion of Western Balkan states in the policies of the EU, going together. This gradual incorporation would largely facilitate the transformations needed in Europe's institutional design.

Like never before, the debate surrounding the future of Europe reached surprising new levels for all those interested in the theories of European integration. After years of public debate on sensitive issues like immigration, asylum and neighbourhood, very vocal opinions emerged on the political scene of Western Europe, some more articulate than others, about the need to properly and ultimately define Europe in terms of frontiers and limits – and even more, in terms of content. This was gradually translated into political speeches calling for not just a different type of integration (with the EU extending to new fields and acquiring sovereign prerogatives), but also public policies of identity[1]. While the content of sovereignty and of identity are open to debate because not yet

[1] Shahin Vallee, "L'Union par la gauche", in *Le Grand Continent*, December 18, 2020, available at https://legrandcontinent.eu/fr/2020/12/18/bilan-europe-macron/, accessed January 2021.

defined[2], the consequences of this new European conversation already have an impact on how leading EU member states understand circumscribing to it the existing processes of European construction – and deconstruction –, such as the enlargement or the Brexit.

Today's European reality generates a paradox because it determines European societies – who feel fragile – to create new instruments in managing what is perceived as a risk, and to raise new obstacles (understood as filters) on the road of those who wish to join the Union. Yet, these very public and political demands decelerate the possibility of EU to reinforce what can be called "a perimeter of security", both geopolitical and identitary, which could be achieved only if the European Union's borders were compatible with Europe's geography.

Secondly, what the new European conversation does not do is debate the institutional design resulting from both the changes required now, under pressure – such as granting health policy competences to the European Commission –, and the transformations or adjustments that shall have to be implemented once the candidate countries finally join the Union. The Western Balkans belong equally to the two categories: they are countries that need to be included in the EU in order to reinforce the Union, but have to confront the double problem of facing accession criteria changed midway and integration into EU institutions which cannot – in their present configuration – provide genuine efficiency.

It became self-evident that the Union cannot achieve completeness, strength and success without the missing pieces of the European puzzle which are the Western Balkans states. Challenges of various origins (environmental, climate, energy, security, migration, digital and geopolitical) are of high and mutual interest to both the Western Balkans and the EU; geography, like always, creates inextricable links and intertwined connections. It is as self-evident that only the integration of the Western Balkans will contribute to finding solutions to these challenges,

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[2] Marlene Wind, *Sovereignty and European Integration : Towards a Post-Hobbesian Order*, London, New York, Palgrave/Macmillan, 2001; Neil Walker, "Late Sovereignty in the European Union", in *Sovereignty in Transition*, N. Walker (ed.), Oxford, Hart Publishing, 2003, pp. 3-32. Félicien Lemaire, "Propos sur la notion de 'souveraineté partagée' ou sur l'apparence de remise en cause du paradigme de la souveraineté", in *Revue française de droit constitutionnel*, vol. 92, n° 4, 2012, p. 821-850 (available online at https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-droit-constitutionnel-2012-4-page-821.htm, accessed January 2021).

with a more predictable future for all involved, and with better risk management.

Yet, the EU policy of integration reached a turning point which is also a defining moment. The 2003 promise of the EU-15 at the Thessaloniki Summit that Western Balkan countries have an EU membership perspective, was only partially respected; Croatia was the only one joining the Union 10 years later… With Europe on moving sands after the 2014-2015 geopolitical and humanitarian crisis in the East and the South, the European Commission outlined a new accession scenario addressed to the Western Balkans, but time demonstrated it to be impracticable approach: in October 2019, the decision taken by the European Council not to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia created discontent and questioned EU's credibility, as integration was unexpectedly postponed.

"Unexpectedly" is a metaphor, because domestic policies in countries where EU enlargement creates unease were already pushing towards more restrictive criteria and a change of method. In the context, Poland and Hungary with Romania and Bulgaria were given as examples of countries accepted too soon and whose reforms of the legal system were (for different reasons) incompatible either with the rule of law or with the EU core values. While these unwanted metamorphosis offered politicians much to speculate on for their national electorate, more constructive opinions underlined the opportunity to re-evaluate this process and suggest proposals for its improvement. A crisis creates opportunities for change; the turning point marked by France in the autumn of 2019 could therefore be directed towards amending the process of EU integration of candidate countries – primarily the Western Balkans – and, taking it a step further, of largely reconceiving EU institutions.

France circulated a new the methodology and presented its own position on reforming the EU integration process of the Western Balkans in a very short non-paper, promptly followed by another nine submitted by other member states[3]. This underlines the tension built in time around the

[3] Vessela Tcherneva, "French connections: How to revitalise the EU enlargement process – European Council on Foreign Relations", December 11, 2019, available at https://ecfr.eu/article/commentary_french_connections_how_to_revitalise_the_eu_enlargement_process/, accessed January 2021. See, for comparison, "France outlines proposal to overhaul EU accession process" in *Politico*, at https://www.politico.eu/article/france-outlines-proposal-to-overhaul-eu-accession-process/.

topic. The "gradual association" idea was the basis for a "reformed approach to the [EU] accession process"[4], while the negotiation process was partitioned in seven stages[5]. The first would concern the rule of law, the fundamental rights, justice and security, and would remain relevant for progress across all sections. The second stage involves negotiations on fields like youth, culture, education, telecommunications, energy, environment; the third on social policy, employment, competitiveness; the fourth regards the economy and the financial affairs; the fifth focuses on the internal market and agriculture; the sixth on foreign affairs while the seventh and the last would comprise all other chapters.

The new accession method: opportunity for a better defined pre-integration status

It would be unwise not the use these complex circumstances as opportunity to manage both the process of enlargement and the reform of the EU in ways that prepare the overall transformation of the Union. One must remember that, geographically, the EU is set to encompass thirty-three countries (thirty-four if Moldova will manage to join), with a(n optimistic) perspective of a final thirty-seven[6]. Such dimensions – as already estimated in 2000 – would require a complete reconsideration of the EU institutional design, with far-reaching changes in prerogatives. Therefore, EU integration can be coordinated together with internal reform.

Each stage completed should open the possibility to participate in EU programmes, be involved in certain sectoral policies and, where appropriate, benefit from targeted financing. Taking the context into account, a first step in 2021 could be a replica of the 2002 one, by addressing an invitation to Western Balkan countries to involve in the Conference on the Future of Europe in the same way Central and Eastern European states were invited to join – two decades ago – the Convention drafting the Treaty for the Constitution of Europe[7]. The invitation would

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[4] Andrew Rettman, "France unveils new model EU enlargement", in *EU Observer*, November 16, 2019, available at https://euobserver.com/enlargement/146624 (accessed January 2021).

[5] *Enlargement Non-paper* (original "Nov 2019 NP Enlargement EN (1)), available at https://www.politico.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Enlargement-nonpaper.pdf (accessed January 2021).

[6] If Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and the United Kingdom will (re)apply.

[7] *Integrating the Western Balkans Completing Future Europe*, special report by Serbian NGOs, the Centre for Contemporary Politics, the European Movement Serbia, as well as the

constitute a positive signal of trust and partnership, and would also forge a sense of responsibility by co-participation.

The French non-paper suggested a gradual association of Western Balkan states with different European Union programmes; providing candidate countries with tangible and particular benefits has a higher potential of leading to the implementation of concrete reforms while offering simultaneously to the citizens of the Western Balkans clear benefits long before actual accession. This helps in building fidelity, a sympathising public opinion, and would energise to the integration process by increasing support for more EU membership-driven changes in respective societies[8].

In addition to programmes, it would be as constructive to suggest participation of the candidate countries in meetings of the Council of the EU (once they close negotiation chapters related to specific field), as well as for the gradual integration in other EU institutions[9].

Certitude on the constructiveness of negotiations and the permanence of their outcome can be guaranteed by the improvement of the already agreed system for measuring progress in chapters' negotiation. The timeframe for reaching EU standards via negotiations should be agreed, thus putting more pressure on the Western Balkans governments to deliver. This would also absolve EU if standards are not met. Setting priorities and well-defined deadlines for implementing them, as well as sanctions in case of failure need to be established, and so do responsibility mechanisms for lack of progress, all accompanied by a high degree of transparency in order to make clear – to citizens of the Western Balkans countries vulnerable to anti-EU propaganda –, how progress towards EU accession is being measured.

Inclusion in programmes requires financial support that the present-day Instruments for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA) do not fully match; funds for the Western Balkans do not reach, by comparison, the levels of the funds granted to Central and Eastern European countries

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European Policy Centre, available at https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Integrating-the-Western-Balkans-Completing-Future-Europe-converted.pdf, accessed January 2021.

[8] This "meeting-halfway" policies could for instance extend to the European Green Deal, which combines fighting climate change with the aim of a carbon-neutral Europe by 2050. In doing so, the EU can require reforms in the same field to Western Balkans countries, creating an excellent opportunity for developing renewable energy.

[9] *Integrating the Western Balkans…*, loc. cit.

before their EU accession. The new candidate countries could be given access to additional funds in ways which increase sustainable development as they move closer to membership and are conditioned by successful reforms in the field of the rule of law and other key areas, with mechanisms for rewards and sanctions. These can act like incentives for governments to commit to the reform agenda[10].

Last but not least, the introduction of the Qualified Majority Vote on accession issues can send a positive sign and increase decision-making efficiency. The current process gives EU member states sufficient individual opportunities to block the accession at any stage, and also use the accession process to resolve open bilateral issues with candidate countries[11]; the Bulgarian-North Macedonian dispute is an example of the most sensitive. This duality can ultimately damage the degree of perceived trust in EU institutions. While member states will certainly have the final say in accepting new members, decision-making within the Council of the EU should be adjusted to allow QMV on procedural aspects of the enlargement, diminishing the impact bilateral political pressure can make on the process.

New integrative policies and institutional reform

Such instruments, once applied, can contribute to the renewal of EU's neighbourhood policy and the development of a more inclusive approach of the area. Two factors are at stake, because enhancing the economic and political collaboration to the wider European space would involve not just candidate countries but also neighbouring states willing to subscribe to EU standards, and at the same time facilitate the EU's further enlargement (to stable geographical limits)[12].

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[10] *Ibidem, loc. cit.*

[11] *Ibidem, loc. cit.*

[12] We ought to say that after the implementation of their Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with the EU, countries like Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine look for ways to bring in renewed momentum into their political aspirations to join the EU. Brussels refusal to extend membership perspectives to these three countries (based on difficult geopolitical realities) comes as a dissatisfaction, but certainly is an incentive for the search of different paths that might be useful for deepening collaboration and partnership. The situation would be slightly easier if the EU weren't to confront Russia's post-Soviet interests in the same area, as the EU's hesitation to extend membership perspectives to the aforementioned states generates strategic and geopolitical ambiguity. The Kremlin does not hesitate to use every opportunity to undermine any European orientation of these former

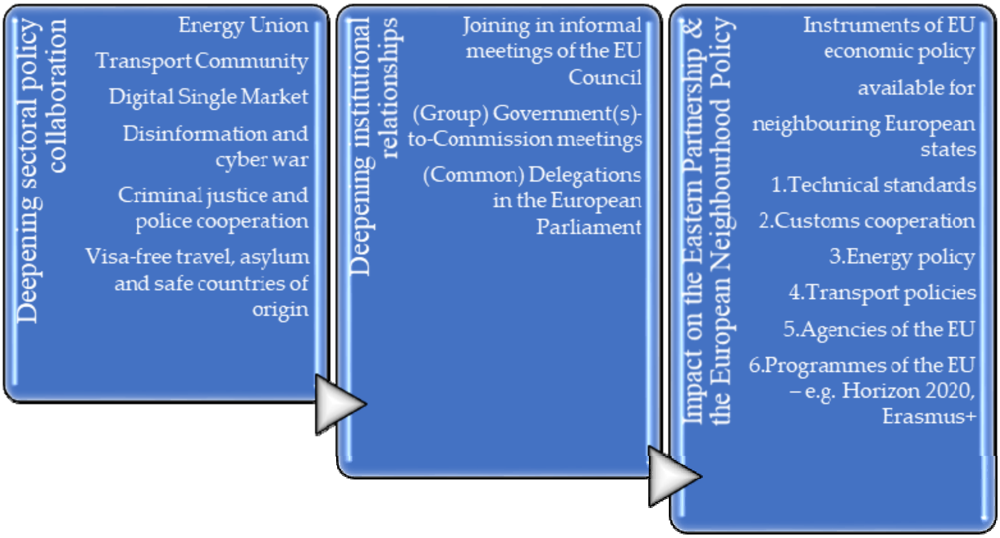
Both the EU's enlargement strategy and neighbourhood policy are in disorder; if enlargement with the Western Balkan states is stalling or advances slowly, the European Neighbourhood Policy has visibly fallen apart in both its southern and eastern branches. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) are a remaining positive legacy.

Any further development of the DCFTAs and further steps with the accession process of the Western Balkans needs to take into account the changing context in of the EU's neighbourhood; from the insidious activities of Russia, China and Turkey to the diverse association agreements with common elements, such as the European Economic Area (EEA), Switzerland, Turkey, Brexit-UK, etc.

The suggestions above – of extending invitations for Western Balkans countries to join some of the EU programmes – may receive a different purpose and constitute integrative policies leading to EU institutional reform. After all, "*the EU should aim to develop a zone of prosperity and a friendly neighbourhood – a 'ring of friends' - with whom the EU enjoys close, peaceful and co-operative relations*" was the founding concept of the Neighbourhood Policy of 2003[13]. As a consequence, what seems necessary in order to prepare the EU institutional reform and the EU governance at 34 would include deepening sectoral policy collaboration and deepening institutional relationship, both with an impact on the Eastern Partnership and the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Soviet republics, acting on the simplistic narrative "the EU does not really want you, so join the Eurasian Economic Union instead".

[13] *Wider Europe — Neighbourhood: A New Framework for Relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*, Brussels, March 11, 2003, COM (2003) 104 final, available online at https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf, accessed January 2021.



Deepening institutional relationships can be achieved on various levels, but the question is whether previous these arrangements could be adapted and further enhanced in the direction of deeper institutional integration. The following formats[14] would certainly help in reinforcing cohesion between the EU and the future members (confirmed or *in spe*):

Government-to-Commission meetings, applicable not only to the candidate countries but to the Eastern Partnership as well. As an example worth mentioning, when Georgia's prime minister visited Brussels, seven cabinet ministers accompanying him met with the plenary college of the European Commission[15]. They attended a plenary session and then divided into three clusters of topics, for additional sittings with their counterparts in the European Commission. Ukraine picked up the model during the EU-

[14] Michael Emerson, "Scenarios for a Wider Europe", in *Policy Insights*, 2/ 2019, Centre for European Policy Studies, available at https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/scenarios-wider-europe/, accessed January 2021.

[15] European Commission press release at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_6493, November 2018 (accessed January 2021).

Ukraine Association Council of December 2018[16] and built on it: the Ukrainian team was headed by the prime minister, accompanied by several ministers; the joint EU-Ukraine statement[17] commented openly on the four sectoral headings promoted by Ukraine, with complementary agreements on EU funding for energy-efficiency measures, open travel and engagements by the European Investment Bank.

A variant could see the Western Balkans candidates and DCFTA countries meeting with the Commission in a **group-government-to-Commission meetings**. This can generate a summit reunion, occasionally, or keep with the lines of the initial Georgian example, if not a less complicated arrangement for separate sectoral policies (e.g. trade, energy, etc., which could be the subject of meetings between ministers and commissioners).

Attending informal meetings of the EU Council is a second option, justified by the fact that at the level of the Council there is already a practice established between the EU and the states of the European Economic Area (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein), whereby for 'informal' meetings (e.g. non-legislative sessions devoted to policy debate) of the EU sectoral Councils the EEA countries may ask to participate in certain sessions (i.e. internal market, energy, competitiveness, environment, transport, defence, justice and home affairs, etc.). The Western Balkans and the associated states could plausibly build on this precedent, and together seek to join certain Council meetings where the agenda justifies it.

Thirdly, in the same institutional cooperation frame should be introduced the European Parliament. The Western Balkans countries and the associated ones have well-established relations with the European Parliament, through delegations (the Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committees); but an alternative or additional initiative could be to organise a common delegation for the Western Balkans (and a second one for the associated states), since the common ground between these two groups of countries makes for a substantial agenda of policy issues.

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[16] European Council press release at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-ministerial-meetings/2018/12/17/, December 2018 (accessed January 2021).

[17] Available at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/17/joint-press-statement-following-the-5th-association-council-meeting-between-the-european-union-and-ukraine/ (accessed January 2021).

The key point here is that despite the political heterogeneity of the candidate and neighbouring states, the EU's concern could be dual:

(1) retaining coherence in the content of its external relations (the close neighbourhood, especially), with a preference revealed by the very substantial list of economic policy instruments open to participation to associated neighbouring states[18];

(2) proceeding towards reform in order to coherently (or credibly or convincingly) function as a Union of 34 members, because this gradual process of inclusion would facilitate the transformations needed in Europe's institutional design by clearing the options at hand.

Scenarios for a new institutional framework

Without a new treaty – which is not on top of the agenda of European leaders, as few comments demonstrated[19] – institutional

[18] These are the following: joining EU's technical standards (via European Standards organisations), the sanitary and phytosanitary Regulations (SPS), the European accreditation, the Agreements for Conformity Assessment and Analysis (ACAA), the European Association of National Metrology Institutes (Euramet); joining the customs cooperation via the Union Customs Code (UCC), the Pan Euro-Med Convention for Preferential Rules of Origin and Diagonal Cumulation (PEM), the Common Transit Convention, the New Computerised Transit System (NCTS), the Authorised Economic Operators (AEO), and the Shared Border Crossing Points; joining the energy policy via the Energy Community Treaty, the Central and South Eastern European Connectivity network (CESEC), or/and the European Network of transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSOE); and joining the transport policies via the Transport Community Treaty, the Pan-European Corridors, the Trans-European Transport network (TEN-T), the European Civil Aviation Agreement (ECAA) and the Civil Aviation Agreements (CAA). Collaborative inclusiveness can be extended to agencies of the EU and the programmes of the EU open to non-member states (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund; Copernicus; European Earth Observation Programme; Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME); Creative Europe, Programme for the cultural and creative sectors; Customs 2020; Erasmus+; European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; European Statistical Programme; European Territorial Cooperation; Fiscalis 2020 (tax administration support); Galileo and EGNOS Programmes, Global satellite navigation system; Health for Growth; Hercules III Anti-fraud Programme; Horizon 2020 Internal Security Fund; Life Programme, Environment and climate change; Pericles 2020, Programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting; SESAR JU, Air Traffic Management modernization; European Union Civil Protection Mechanism).

[19] Such as Clément Beaune, France's minister of State for European affairs and Emmanuel Macron's *éminence grise*, in his tribune "Europe after Covid-19", published initially in

adjustment equal to a reform would be possible only if the existing institutions act on their more or less formal prerogatives. Given the amount of public debates on this topic in the last three years, it was by now clear that the creation of a European sovereignty will not be implemented via the introduction of a federal constitution (or analogous settlement), but by acting on the present-day functioning of the EU and the creation of a *collective sovereignty*.

Taking into account this preference as well as the large number of member states, the European Council would turn out as leading the institutional system of the European Union. With a Swiss approach[20] its functions could go well beyond the current ones and could consist of formulating the main directions of the Union, adopting the common strategies in foreign policy and exercising the constituent power on a European-wide scale. It would constitute a collective body with the ultimate authority in the event of persistent conflicts at the level of the Council of Ministers. Consequently, the Council would assume a more important legislative role. In addition – and here may lay the most important part of the institutional innovation – its President (elected by peers for 2½ years based on criteria taking into account size and geographic location of countries) would have a specific role of political initiative, both internally and externally. The President would choose the Secretary-General of the Council, in order to co-ordinate the work at the level of the European Council as well as to control the operation of the presidential mandate at the level of the Council of Ministers. Finally, the new position would receive a powerful administration – partly at the expense of the European Commission – and would make the Foreign Affairs Council an executive body.

The Council of the European Union would have its executive responsibilities strengthened; but the nomination of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy should come from the President of the European Council only, instead of the

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September 2020; available at https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/commentary/feature/europe-after-covid/ (respectively in French at https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/politique-etrangere/articles-de-politique-etrangere/leurope-dela-covid-19), accessed January 2021.

[20] Among the latest comparisons, Agnieszka Nitszke, "Szwajcarski model federalizmu. Wnioski dla Unii Europejskiej" in *Przegląd Politologiczny*, 3/2014, pp. 19-31, version in English available at https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/154442787.pdf, accessed January 2021.

European Council as a whole, in ways that reinforce EU's single voice on the world stage.

In the new institutional frame, the Commission would be interleaved between the more powerful European Council, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, with a redesigned role, limited to administrative functions and the management of the internal market. It might also turn out to be the opportunity to redefine the Commission as a technocratic body only, with no political leadership, bringing the transnational *vs.* national legitimacy contest to an end by placing political leadership in the European Council exclusively.

The European Parliament needs to acquire at least limited power of legislative initiative, with the possibility not just to amend and reject legislation, but also to propose it; it is the only way to give genuine democratic credentials to the European Union without the need of imagining supplementary institutional connections between the European Parliament and the national ones. While the Parliament does have the right to ask the Commission to draft legislation, and as the Commission is increasingly following the Parliament's proposals, it was stated that the Parliament has a de facto right of legislative initiative[21]; but in fact, for institutional coherence reasons, it is high time for the Parliament to acquire direct representativity as a mark of a functioning European political demos. (This, of course, aside other reform projects, such as the reform of the electoral law of the EU[22].)

Needless to say, the suggestions above are both debatable and revisable; but one must keep in mind that the change in method (and implicit criteria) opens a window of opportunity for the European Union to embark on a process of reform. The text above is destined to underline not

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[21] Matt Williams, "Pöttering defends parliament's role at EU summits", in *The Parliament Magazine*, June 24, 2008; archived from the original on 24 May 2011, available now at https://web.archive.org/web/20110524113601/http://www.theparliament.com/policy-focus/foreign-affairs/foreign-affairs-article/newsarticle/poettering-defends-parliaments-role-at-eu-summits/, accessed January 2021.

[22] Various projects were discussed in time, of which the following available on the website of the Parliament, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-union-of-democratic-change/file-reform-of-the-electoral-law-of-the-eu (accessed February 2021) and the most recent one, voiced by the French president Emmanuel Macron, see David Herszenhorn, "Macron's group in EU Parliament demands pan-European candidate lists" in *Politico Europe*, June 29, 2019, available at https://www.politico.eu/article/macrons-group-in-eu-parliament-demands-pan-european-candidate-lists/ (accessed February 2021).

only the option in itself, but the limited amount of measures to be taken in order to reshape institutions with a fair amount of efficiency – especially at times when such measures are not only needed in order to credibly improve interaction with third parties, but also to conciliate historical internal debates related to "transnational-vs-intergovernmental" Europe building.

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The Western Balkans within the European Commission. Discourse analysis of President Ursula von der Leyen

Elena Grad-Rusu

Introduction

The enlargement policy is known as one of the most important of the European Union. In order to be considered ready for integration, each candidate needs to demonstrate that it is respecting the principles of democracy. To prevent further democratic decline, the European Commission is helping those countries wishing to join the EU to meet the necessary criteria for membership, maintaining its focus on monitoring the aspiring members on their paths to stable and prosperous democracies governed by the rule of law[1]. This is also the case of Western Balkans countries which are stable partners of the European Union and those most interested in integration. In this regard, encouraging progress has been made by the Western Balkans countries in the past two decades in terms of regional cooperation and advances towards eventual EU membership, and these trends are likely to continue, boosting growth and investments[2]. Even so, these countries still face major and will take a long time to catch up with the average standard of living in the EU. Nevertheless, this does not stop the European leaders from expressing their attitude regarding future integration, whether it is about support and concrete actions or just silence and formal reactions.

So, over the past several years, the European Commission has remained rather silent on the perspective of a concrete date of integration for the Western Balkans, countries whose future was paved by the European Council at the Thessaloniki Summit in 2003[3]. However, the European Commission is one of the major players in this process of

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[1] Marko Kmezić, "Recalibrating the EU's Approach to the Western Balkans", *European View*, 2020, pp. 54-61.

[2] Peter Sanfey, Jakov Milatovic, *The Western Balkans in transition: diagnosing the constraints on the path to a sustainable market economy*, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2018, p. 1.

[3] European Council, *Thessaloniki European Council 19 and 20 June 2003. Presidency conclusions. 11638/03. Brussels, 1 October,* 2003, available at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/20847/76279.pdf, accessed 9 November 2020.

enlargement, and in order to understand the facts it is also important to analyse official declarations, like those of the presidents of this European institution.

This article analyses the current European Commission perspective regarding the enlargement towards the Western Balkans. More specifically, it includes a discourse analysis of the references to the Western Balkans in the discourse of the current European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen. This comes in a context in which the previous president, Jean Claude Juncker, was famous for his silence on enlargement, mostly influenced by external factors such as the geopolitical and geostrategic context from the previous years, rather than being considered as a specific attitude on behalf of the European Commission. If only to remind some events that sustained his political declarations and choice to remain silent, we can mention the Ukraine crises, Russian influence, Erdogan's policy or the refugees' crises. But more than that, we are talking about the Brexit context; it is more difficult to talk about enlargement when you are facing the first attempt to leave by one member.

Methodologically, this study is conducted by using qualitative methods such as document and speech analysis (official declarations), but also including quantitative methods as the use of WordSmith Tools, which is an integrated suite of programs for looking at how words behave in texts. In doing the qualitative analysis, the study identifies and analyses the stylistic features of Ursula von der Leyen's discourse regarding enlargement. It is also important to mention the time and context in which those statements were made in order to find an explanation for the different perspectives of president von der Leyen on the Western Balkans' integration compared to the former European Commission president, Jean Claude Juncker.

Selected discourses of President Ursula von der Leyen

The analysis begins with several official declarations made when Ursula von der Leyen was just the president-elect, as she addressed reporters in Berlin following a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. This meeting took place on 8 November 2019. During that event, she replied regarding the Western Balkans as follows[4]:

[4] Hans von der Burchard, *Von der Leyen: EU path for Western Balkans is of 'great strategic importance'*, 2019, available at https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-path-for-western-balkans-is-of-great-strategic-importance-ursula-von-der-leyen/, accessed 12 November 2020.

- *I firmly believe that it is of great strategic importance for us to link the Western Balkans as closely as possible to the European Union;*
- *Albania and Northern Macedonia have made incredible efforts to reach the point we have asked them to reach;*
- *As long as it is not possible to actually open the accession talks … I will put all my energy into developing joint projects that will increasingly bind these countries to us through close cooperation;*

She also said, as a warning, that *if we don't do that (link the Western Balkans), others will fall into a vacuum, and we do not want that to happen*. This can be interpreted as an acceptance of the fact that a possible integration of the Western Balkans brings benefits also to the EU, and not just to those countries.

The words of the European Commission president were approved by chancellor Angela Merkel, who added that it *is extremely important, for strategic European interests, that these countries don't lose hope in the prospect of accession*[5].

To continue the research, the moment when the European Commission welcomed the Council's decision to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia, on 25 March 2020, was also included because it contained references to all the other Western Balkans countries, like - *opening of accession talks sends a loud and clear message not only to the two countries, but to the Western Balkans as a whole*[6]. Other phrases that shed light on the situation of the Western Balkans and express the new European Commission president's position towards this subject are:

- *The European Union delivers on its promise;*
- *North Macedonia and Albania did what was asked of them and they have continued making progress in the reforms needed;*
- *Today marks the start of the journey to a bigger and stronger European Union;*
- *And this decision is in the European Union's geostrategic interest*[7].

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[5] *Ibidem*.

[6] European Commission, *Press release - Commission welcomes the green light to opening of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia*, 2020, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_519, accessed 12 November 2020.

[7] *Ibidem*.

A few months later, the EU-Western Balkans summit took place in Zagreb on 6 May 2020 via video conference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It brought together heads of state or government from EU member states and leaders from the six Western Balkans partners: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia and Kosovo. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, also participated, along with other representatives of European institutions or international organizations. During this event, a common voice was heard regarding the support for the Western Balkans on their European path, meant to encourage those countries throughout their region's political, economic, and social transformation.

Ursula von der Leyen mentioned that *the Western Balkans are an absolute priority for the European Union and for my Commission.* She also reaffirmed that *the Western Balkans belong in the EU. There is no question for us about this. And this is why I firmly believe that the European Union has a special responsibility in assisting its partners in the region.*[8] Also, in the *Zagreb Declaration*, it was mentioned that *the EU and the Western Balkans partners share the objective of a peaceful, strong, stable and united Europe, underpinned by our historical, cultural and geographical ties and by our mutual political, security and economic interests.*[9]

On 26 June 2020, in Brussels, during the meeting with the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, the President of the European Commission mentioned that *both sides agreed on the importance of reforms for further progress on the European path, especially when it comes to the rule of law and the fight against corruption.*[10]

[8] European Commission, *Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel and Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia, following the EU-Western Balkans Zagreb Summit*, 2020, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_825, accessed 2 December 2020.

[9] European Council, Council of the European Union, *Zagreb Declaration*, 2020, available at https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/43776/zagreb-declaration-en-06052020.pdf?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Zagreb%2BDeclaration%2C%2B6%2BMay%2B2020, accessed 2 December 2020.

[10] European Western Balkans Website, *Von der Leyen with Vučić on the continuation of the dialogue, reforms and elections*, 2020, available at https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/06/26/von-der-layen-with-vucic-on-the-continuation-of-the-dialogue-reforms-and-elections/, accessed 3 December 2020.

One of the most important aspects in this context was related to the relation between Serbia and Kosovo, in which case Ursula von der Leyen stated that *reforms needed to bring Serbia closer to the EU. The dialogue with Kosovo is key.* In order to make things work better, the president of the EC voiced support for the continuation of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, with the mediation of the EU.[11]

Also, amid the pandemic which defines the way in which political decisions are made, the European Commission president said w*e will also support Serbia's post-pandemic recovery.* This was a promise to help the Western Balkans in facing the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic by implementing *an economic and investment package in the spring, which should help the long-term recovery of the region and bring it closer to the Union*, which was stated in a press release after the meeting between von der Leyen and Vučić. During the meeting there were also references regarding further progress on the European path, especially when it comes to the rule of law and the fight against corruption.[12]

In her first State of the Union address at the European Parliament Plenary Session on 16 September 2020, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, included a few ideas regarding the Western Balkans[13]:

- *Europe will always be ready to build strong partnerships with our closest neighbours. That starts with the Western Balkans*;
- *The Western Balkans are part of Europe - and not just a stopover on the Silk Road*;
- *The decision six months ago to open accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia was truly historic. Indeed, the future of the whole region lies in the EU. We share the same history; we share the same destiny*.

These words have made a clear statement that the new European Commission is open to enlargement and especially to supporting a strong

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[11] *Ibidem*. See also Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean and Laura Herța, "L'Union européenne en tant qu'acteur de la réconciliation entre la Serbie et le Kosovo", in Nicolae Păun (ed.), *Disintegration and Integration in East-Central Europe: the current relevance of regional cooperation*, PUC, Cluj-Napoca, 2020, pp. 137-178.

[12] *Ibidem*.

[13] European Commission, *State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen at the European Parliament Plenary*, 2020, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_1655, accessed 30 November 2020.

partnership with its closest neighbours, i.e. other European countries with a similar history. The President of the EC came with concrete facts mentioning the moment when accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia were started.

Through a video message delivered in the context of the Western Balkans Summit organized in Sofia, on 10 November 2020, president von der Leyen said:

The Western Balkans is an absolute priority for my Commission since my very first day. The region's future is in the European Union. 2020 has been a challenging year but we firmly stood together. Our Economic and Investment Plan recently adopted will speed up the economic development of the Western Balkans and it will boost its convergence with the European Union, support the implementation of fundamental reforms and bring the region closer to the EU single market. This plan can help you to change the daily lives of your people and the business of the region four to five years from now.[14]

The summit was organized by the Western Balkan leaders to further strengthen regional cooperation as a way to advance on their European path, especially taking into account that regional cooperation is one of the main tasks of the European Union. The meeting reminded the Western Balkans countries about the Green Agenda that they have to follow and which is focused on modern, green, and people-focused investment[15], adding that a lot of other reforms should be taken in order to get onto that path.

This meeting also brought into the limelight the role of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans which the European Commission had put forward in October 2020. The goal of implementing such a plan was to support the region's leaders in developing a common regional market and in implementing a green and digital transition, which is crucial for bringing the region closer to the EU[16]. The success of this plan will create benefits for the people in the Western

[14] *Idem*, *Western Balkans Summit in Sofia: Important steps taken to advance regional cooperation to boost socio-economic recovery and convergence with the EU*, 2020, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2051, accessed 20 November 2020.

[15] *Ibidem*.

[16] *Ibidem*.

Balkans, but also for the European Union, by strengthening ties among the partners and shaping the European Identity[17].

Table 1. Keywords and collocations

	Word	req.	%	Texts	%	Dis persion
	EUROPEAN	6	1.5 8	6	1 00.00	0.69
	EU	8	0.9 6	6	1 00.00	0.64
	EUROPEAN ACCESSION	2	0.7 6	6	1 00.00	0.47
	WESTERN BALKANS	0	0.6 9	5	8 3.33	0.61
	NEGOTIATIONS	2	0.6 9	6	1 00.00	0.52
	EUROPEAN COMMISSION	8	0.6 2	6	1 00.00	0.53
	BALKANS	0	0.5 9	5	8 3.33	0.63
	REFORMS	1	0.3 8	4	6 6.67	0.53
	ENLARGEMENT	1	0.3 4	5	8 3.33	0.67
0	MEMBER STATES		0.2 1	3	5 0.00	0.45
1	STRATEGIC		0.1 4	1	1 6.67	0.35
2	PARTNERS		0.1 4	1	1 6.67	0.24
3	PANDEMIC		0.1 4	3	5 0.00	0.24
4	OPENING		0.1 4	2	3 3.33	0.47
5	NEIGHBOURHOOD		0.1 4	4	6 6.67	0.47
6	FUTURE		0.1 4	3	5 0.00	0.47
7	CORONAVIRUS		0.1 0	2	3 3.33	0.51
8	COOPERATION		0.1 0	2	3 3.33	0.51
9	UNITED		0.0 7	1	1 6.67	0.00
0	NEIGHBOURS		0.0 7	1	1 6.67	0.00
1	CANDIDATE		0.0 7	2	3 3.33	0.35
2	INTEGRATION		0.0 3	1	1 6.67	0.00

It is also important to mention that this support towards enlargement and the openness to trust for the Western Balkans come in the context of Brexit and the trade agreement negotiations with the United

17 Antoanela-Paula Mureșan, "The first steps towards a European identity", *On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe*, 2013, pp. 15-24.

Kingdom, the first member state to have left the European Union. In this respect, Ursula von der Leyen mentioned that *trust is the foundation of a strong partnership, and Europe will always be ready to build strong partnerships with our closest neighbours. This starts with the Western Balkans*[18].

In order to count keywords and collocations in all the six documents that have been selected and analysed, I have used a program named *Wordsmith tools*. As it can be seen, the program counts frequency, percentage, in how many texts the words appeared and how they were dispersed. Thus, the most common words were *European*, *European accession*, *Western Balkans* and *negotiations*, included in all the selected documents and used mostly more than once.

Regarding the stylistic features of Ursula von der Leyen's discourse on enlargement, she used multiple figures of style, especially anaphors, repetitions and metaphors. An anaphora is a repetition at the start of multiple sentences of a word or group of words[19]. The use of the anaphora as a rhetorical strategy is illustrated by *we want*, *we firmly stood together*, *we have also associated our Western Balkan partners in the European Union*.

I have identified inclusive language as a recurrence. For example, words and references such as *we want*, *our closet neighbours*, *we share the same history*, *we share the same destiny*, *for us to link the Western Balkans*, *joint projects*, *we firmly stood together* are characteristic of an inclusive language in which the audience is directly approached and mentioned during the discourse.

Also, there is ample use of the plural personal pronoun *we*. The use of the personal pronoun in the first person plural, *we*, aims to shorten the distance between the public (the Western Balkans) and the European Commission's president. The meaning used by Ursula von der Leyen is that she is trying to reduce the gap between these two parts, by making the audience feel included.

Ursula von der Leyen also uses positive terminology, illustrated by words like *believe*, *efforts*, *promise*, *results*, *initiatives*, *reforms*, *support*, *partnership*, *accession negotiations*, *priority* and *progress*, which may

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[18] European Western Balkans, *Von der Leyen: Western Balkans are part of Europe, not just a stopover on the Silk Road*, available at https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/09/16/von-der-leyen-western-balkans-are-part-of-europe-not-just-a-stopover-on-the-silk-road/, accessed 12 November 2020.

[19] Delia Pop-Flanja, "Le discours sur le Brexit. Une analyse des stratégies discursives de Theresa May", *Synergies Roumanie*, n° 13, 2018, p. 17.

encourage the audience, especially those directly affected by the messages delivered, and prompt hope and interest in establishing a connection.

After analysing all the selected declarations, I can confirm that the language regarding enlargement is coherent, and follows a classic structure with introduction to the subject, main points and conclusion. Still, strategic ambiguity is used as a characteristic of political discourses. Even though multiple times concrete future actions are not mentioned, some of them have already been taken, such as:

- *opening more chapters in one go. This is the new methodology which we adopted earlier this year;*
- *the European Union has mobilised an unparalleled financial package of EUR 3.3 billion. EUR 750 million have been micro-economic financial assistance;*
- *we have also associated our Western Balkan partners in the European Union initiatives that are normally only reserved for Member States. For example, with the Joint Procurement Initiative to buy medical supplies like masks and ventilators*[20].

Conclusion

After analysing the declarations, I can conclude that Ursula von der Leyen has created more than subtle connections, as she has freely expressed the European Commission's support for integrating the Western Balkans countries. She uses phrases with a simple structure and she usually resorts to the first person pronoun in the plural – *we*.

In conclusion, through its declarations, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, is supporting the idea of welcoming new members, especially from the Western Balkans. Since she is in this position, she has mentioned multiple times that the European Union is ready to help and inspire the Western Balkans on their European path, but only if they show faster tangible results in their respective reforms.

One of the most important moments of the period analysed in this article is the opening of accession talks with Albania and North Macedonia, on 25 March 2020, proving that the European Union stands firm on its

[20] European Commission, *Statement by President von der Leyen at the joint press conference with President Michel and Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia, following the EU-Western Balkans Zagreb Summit*, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_20_825, accessed 3 December 2020.

promises and supports the idea of enlargement by integrating Western Balkans countries.

Taking into account the fact that this study has included only declaration from the first year of Ursula von der Leyen's mandate, one can easily say that she has included the subject of integrating the Western Balkans every time an opportunity presented itself, such as in her State of the Union Address, and not only during specific meetings with leaders from those countries. Also, the fact that has accepted to participate in thematic meetings with Western Balkans leaders is a sign of showing interest in supporting them throughout their European endeavour.

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European Western Balkans Website, *Von der Leyen with Vučić on the continuation of the dialogue, reforms and elections*, 2020, available at https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/06/26/von-der-layen-with-vucic-on-the-continuation-of-the-dialogue-reforms-and-elections/, accessed 3 December 2020.

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Part IV:

Building Democracy in the Western Balkans:

Focus on civil society, human rights and administrative reform

LA DIMENSION HUMAINE DE LA CONSTRUCTION DE LA DEMOCRATIE

Odile Perrot

Au cœur de la problématique des Balkans occidentaux ces dernières décennies, la construction de la démocratie participe de pratiques citoyennes autant que de l'ingénierie institutionnelle, de normes juridiques et de stratégies politiques. C'est sur l'importance de cet élément humain qu'il s'agit de s'arrêter ici. En effet, l'approche techniciste, pour rassurante qu'elle soit, a pu conduire à « confondre l'usage de certains équipements électoraux avec l'acceptation des valeurs démocratiques »[1] jusqu'à ce que soit mis en évidence et réintégrés les pratiques individuelles et en réseaux des relations internationales, impondérables sociaux et autres « schèmes comportementaux »[2]. Cet article s'inscrit dans le creuset de ces réflexions enrichies des travaux sur les trajectoires de transformation en Europe de l'Est puis dans les Balkans. Il fait le point sur les pays de la région, entre démocraties semi-consolidées et régimes hybrides, pour reprendre la typologie proposée par l'ONG américaine Freedom House, comme le propose la carte ci-dessous.

[1] Olivier IHL, « Urne », *in* Pascal PERRINEAU et Dominique REYNIÉ (ed.), *Dictionnaire du vote*, Paris : PUF, 2001, p. 926

[2] Christophe SOLIOZ, « Appropriation des processus de transition et de démocratisation dans l'espace post-yougoslave », Premières rencontres des études balkaniques en France « Études balkaniques : état des savoirs et pistes de recherche », *Working paper*, Paris : Association française d'études sur les Balkans (AFEBALK), 19-20 décembre 2002, p. 13.

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2020



SURVEY FINDINGS

Regime Type

Consolidated Democracy (CD)

Semi-Consolidated Democracy (SCD)

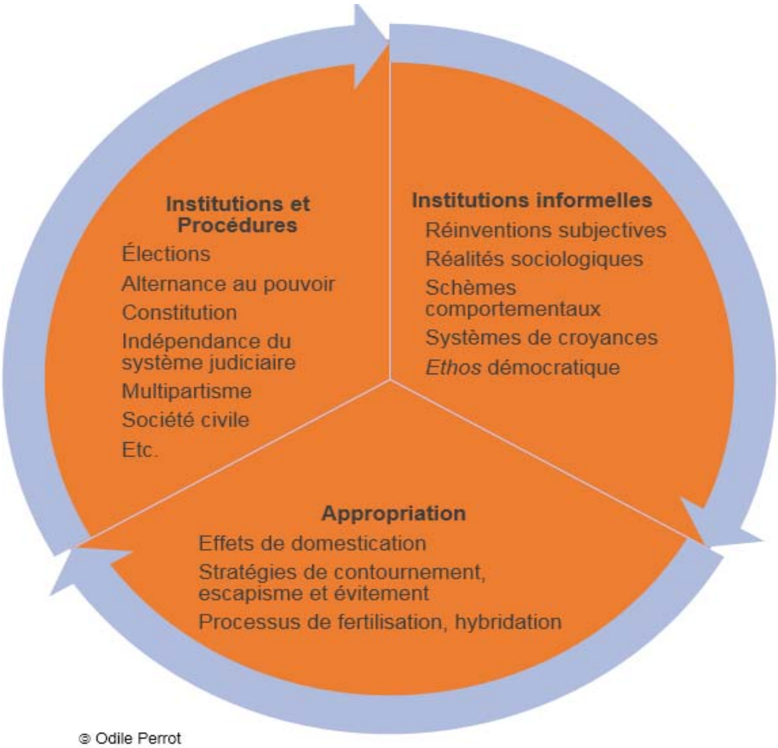
Transitional Government or Hybrid Regime (T/H)

Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (SCA)

Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (CA)

I – La clé de voûte des processus politiques

Il y a une dimension humaine à la construction de la démocratie au-delà de l'établissement d'institutions (Parlement, cour Constitutionnelle, défenseur des droits de l'homme…), de la rédaction d'une Constitution et de la mise en place de procédures garantissant la séparation des pouvoirs et la participation de toutes les communautés, ou encore du dispositif technique des élections[3].



[3] Parmi une littérature foisonnante, voir notamment les articles du *Journal of Democracy*, Baltimore : The Johns Hopkins University Press : Larry DIAMOND, "Is the Third Wave Over ?", n° 3, volume 7, juillet 1996, et, Thomas CAROTHERS, "The End of the Transition Paradigm", n° 1, volume 13, janvier 2002. Citons aussi Guy HERMET, « Démocratisation », *in* Pascal PERRINEAU et Dominique REYNIÉ (ed.), *Dictionnaire du vote*, Paris : PUF, 2001 ; Philippe CLARET, « La marche forcée des États postcommunistes vers l'État de droit et la démocratie pluraliste », *in* Slobodan MILAČIĆ (ed.), *La réinvention de l'État. Démocratie politique et ordre juridique en Europe centrale et orientale*, Bruxelles : Bruylant, 2003.

Valeur ajoutée et cheville ouvrière du processus, l'investissement humain creuse la différence. Il s'entend là dans toutes ses acceptations, à savoir en termes de ressources concrètes, de pratiques quotidiennes et de confrontations des personnalités. En ce sens, sont déterminants les choix et stratégies des acteurs politiques et civils que sont les agents internationaux et locaux, les membres des forces de police, de l'institution judiciaire ou de l'administration, mais aussi les individus engagés dans des structures associatives ou dans des ONG transnationales. Chacun s'approprie ainsi à son échelle les canons et les rituels démocratiques et les intègre dans son quotidien. Que l'on pense aux standards des élections que sont l'isoloir ou l'urne transparente, résultats d'une histoire et d'une réflexion politiques[4] et universaux désormais admis de la régularité des compétitions électorales.

L'amplitude humaine intervient toutefois à un deuxième niveau, car cette dynamique d'appropriation n'exclut pas, bien au contraire, des stratégies de contournement qui passent par des processus d'hybridation, voire de phagocytose[5]. La richesse des éléments interagissant les uns avec les autres est résumée dans le diagramme ci-contre. Parce que hommes et femmes en sont les artisans, la construction de la démocratie est soumise aux atouts et aléas de la puissance des personnalités. Les actions et décisions sont notoirement dominées par l'empirisme et sont souvent le fruit des luttes d'influence, de réponses précipitées et de calculs variés.

Cette analyse fait écho aux notions, remises au goût du jour dans le cadre des confinements à répétition pour contenir l'épidémie de COVID-19, que sont l'acceptation sociale de mesures politiques[6], c'est-à-dire la nécessaire adhésion des populations aux réformes et décisions politiques. Celle-ci est déterminante dans l'efficacité des mesures, qui doit prendre en

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[4] Olivier IHL, *Le vote*, Paris : Montchrestien, coll. Clefs, 2000 ; Laurent LE GALL, *A voté : une histoire de l'élection*, Anamosa, 2017.

[5] Dominique DARBON, « A qui profite le mime ? Le mimétisme institutionnel confronté à ses représentations en Afrique », *in* Yves MENY (ed.), *Les politiques de mimétisme institutionnel. La greffe et le rejet*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 1993, pp. 118-119. Voir aussi Renée FREGOSI, *Parcours transnationaux de la démocratie. Transition, consolidation, déstabilisation*, Bruxelles *:* Peter Lang, 2011.

[6] Pour reprendre l'expression de Camille Landais, professeur d'économie à la London School of Economics et membre du Conseil d'analyse économique rattaché à Matignon. Voir notamment son interview dans le quotidien *Le Monde*, 2 novembre 2020, et l'article de France culture dans le cadre de l'émission de Xavier MARTINET, « Le journal de l'éco : "Acceptation sociale" : le nouveau souci des économistes ? », 24 novembre 2020 : https://www.franceculture.fr/emissions/le-journal-de-leco/le-journal-de-leco-du-mardi-24-novembre-2020 (consulté le 12 février 2021).

compte leur impact social et non seulement économique. Dans cette logique, la validation populaire passe par un choix collectif, qui peut se faire en amont des décisions politiques normatives. L'importance de la routinisation du processus qui fait de la démocratie, comme l'avait défini Adam Przeworski[7], « le seul jeu en ville » (« the only game in town ») reste on ne peut plus d'actualité.

Surtout, la variable humaine a été repérée, analysée et mise en exergue par la science politique, notamment les thèses constructivistes et l'approche décisionnelle. Les choix des acteurs ne sont pas seulement déterminés par la rationalité, mais aussi par une pluralité « de perceptions, de réinventions subjectives, d'identités imaginées »[8] qui se superposent dans le champ du *decision making process*. Pour codifié qu'il soit, le jeu politique est lié à des individus qui ont leurs défauts et leurs qualités, sont guidés par leur capital de connaissances et par leurs systèmes de croyances, qui exploitent plus ou moins la « force des liens faibles »[9] et sont influencés par ce que Tocqueville appelait le « hasard du moment »[10].

Si les réalités sociologiques sont un marqueur de la démocratie, l'organisation réticulaire des individus en constituent un levier. C'est l'un des atouts de l'approche de la démocratie substantielle – ou *substantive democracy*, par opposition à la démocratie normative ou *procedural democracy* -, qui prend notamment en compte l'existence de la société civile et d'institutions médiatrices dans le fonctionnement démocratique, au-delà des techniques qui l'ordonnent. Il faut penser l'intégration des impondérables sociaux, des pratiques individuelles et coordonnées, des habitudes et attitudes parallèles pour dépasser la crise de la représentation politique des démocraties occidentales. D'un côté, la population se

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[7] Juan J. LINZ et Alfred STEPAN, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. 5-6.

[8] Marie-Claude SMOUTS, « Introduction. La mutation d'une discipline », *in* Marie-Claude SMOUTS (ed.), *Les nouvelles relations internationales. Pratiques et théories*, Paris : Presses de Sciences Po / Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, coll. Références, 1998, p..22. Voir aussi, dans le même ouvrage, Samy COHEN, « Décision, pouvoir et rationalité dans l'analyse de la politique étrangère », pp.77-89.

[9] Mark GRANOVETTER, "The Strength of Weak Ties", *American Journal of Sociology*, n° 6, volume 78, 1973, p.1360-1380. Voir aussi Ariel COLONOMOS, « Sociologie et science politique : les réseaux, théories et objets d'études », critique bibliographique, *Revue française de science politique*, Paris : Presses de Sciences Po / Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, n° 1, volume 45, février 1995, p. 170.

[10] Alexis de TOCQUEVILLE, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Paris : Gallimard, coll. Folio Histoire, tome II, , 1961, p. 65.

désintéresse de plus en plus du champ électoral ; de l'autre, elle s'investit dans des activités associatives, s'organise au sein de « coalitions de cause »[11] – *advocacy coalitions* – pour agir sur le terrain, comme pour influencer les pouvoirs publics. Qu'ils soient « hors souveraineté »[12] ou « en réseaux »[13], les acteurs organisés en société civile participent donc à la dynamique démocratique. Cette action des forces vives de la population prend tout son sens vingt ans après la fin des conflits dans la région.

Pour appuyer ce propos, brossons un rapide tableau des récents mouvements de mobilisations variées dans les Balkans occidentaux, qui sont un signe de la vivacité de la société mais aussi de la dynamique de la construction du jeu politique démocratique.

II – L'heure des mobilisations sociales

Les mouvements citoyens témoignent de l'ancrage du processus d'appropriation sociétale. Dans les Balkans occidentaux comme ailleurs, on assiste à une mobilisation tous azimuts qui s'étend au-delà du champ strictement politique. La population a internalisé la grammaire démocratique et s'exprime contre la dérive autoritaire des gouvernements, pour la défense de l'environnement et celle d'une justice indépendante, ou encore contre la corruption et l'impunité. Cet activisme, qui se traduit notamment par des manifestations et des pétitions, reflète le désenchantement vis-à-vis de la situation économique mais aussi le rejet de gouvernements successifs perçus comme corrompus et cupides, mus par des stratégies clientélistes au mépris de l'intérêt commun (voir le graphique ci-dessous, établi sur la base des données de l'Indice de perception de corruption 2020 de Transparency international[14]).

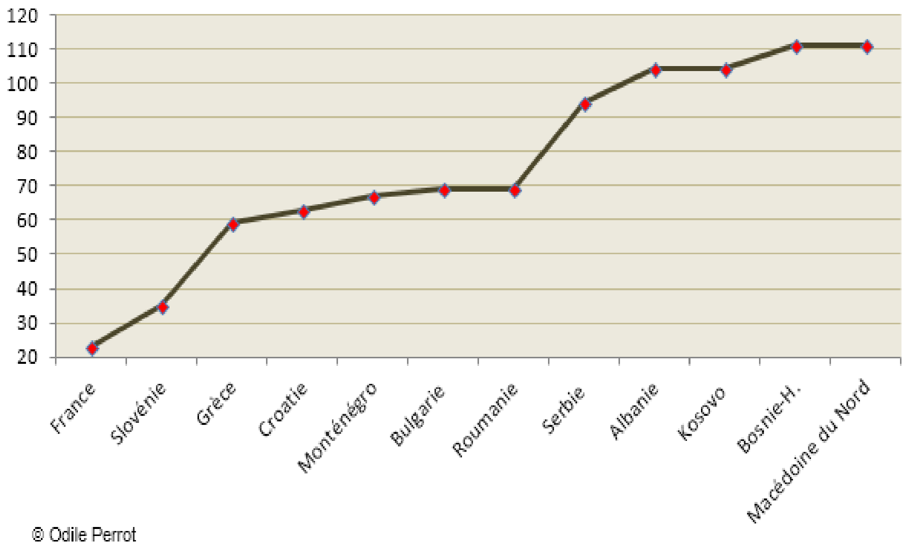
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[11] Julien WEISBEN, « Le militant et l'expert : les associations civiques face au système politique européen », *Politique européenne*, Paris : L'Harmattan, n° 4, printemps 2001, p.106

[12] James ROSENAU, *in* Josepha LAROCHE, *Politique internationale*, Paris : LGDJ, 2ème édition, 2000, p.123

[13] Josepha LAROCHE, *Politique internationale*, Paris : LGDJ, 2ème édition, 2000, p.176

[14] Indice de Perception de Corruption (IPC) 2020 : La COVID-19, une crise sur les plans sanitaire et économique, mais aussi sur le plan de la corruption : https://transparency-france.org/actu/indice-de-perception-de-corruption-ipc-2020-la-covid-19-une-crise-sur-les-plans-sanitaire-et-economique-mais-aussi-sur-le-plan-de-la-corruption/ (consulté le 12 février 2021)



Les exemples sont nombreux en Bosnie-Herzégovine. Sur le plan économique, les travailleurs des usines de Tuzla se sont opposés aux privatisations sauvages[15] et les protestations contre la construction de centrales hydroélectriques mettant en danger la rivière à Kruscica ont abouti à une décision de justice mettant un terme au projet[16]. À une autre échelle, la mobilisation populaire « Justice pour David » (« Pravda za Davida ») est la plus importante depuis la fin de la guerre en 1995. C'est suite à l'assassinat du jeune David Dragičević que la population de Banja Luka s'est organisée pour dénoncer l'impunité de la police de la ville et le climat de répression dans la ville[17]. Né en mars 2018, le mouvement a

[15] Voir le colloque (webinaire) « Colloque : 25 ans après Dayton, la Bosnie-Herzégovine aujourd'hui » organisé par la Fondation Henrich Böll et le Courrier des Balkans, les 2-3 décembre 2020, et disponible en ligne : https://fr.boell.org/fr/2020/12/18/colloque-25-ans-apres-dayton-la-bosnie-herzegovine-aujourdhui (consulté le 12 février 2021).

[16] Umberto BACCHI, "Threatening wilderness, dams fuel protests in the Balkans", *Reuters*, 4 juin 2018 : https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bosnia-environment-dams-idUSKCN1J0007 (consulté le 12 février 2021) ; Nedim Dervisbegovic, "Bosnia's Federation Entity Moves to Curb Hydro-Power Blight", *Balkan Insight*, 24 juin 2020 : https://balkaninsight.com/2020/06/24/bosnias-federation-entity-moves-to-curb-hydro-power-blight/ (consulté le 12 février 2021).

[17] Voir notamment les chroniques d'Aline CATEUX consacrées à la Bosnie-Herzégovine et publiées dans la revue *Est Europa*, Institut Universitaire Varenne : https://www.est-europa.univ-pau.fr/est-europa-en-ligne.html (consulté le 2 novembre 2020).

évolué vers une mise en accusation du pouvoir en place en République serbe de Bosnie, gangrené par la corruption, la violence et les trafics.

Ce mécontentement citoyen sourdait depuis une dizaine d'années, si l'on se souvient des manifestations qui ont émaillé le pays pendant « la révolution des bébés » en 2013[18], transcendant des clivages ethniques instrumentalisés par une partie de la classe politique. Il atteste que, petit à petit, les intérêts communs des citoyens prennent le pas sur les divisions communautaires maintenues artificiellement par les élites ethno-nationalistes depuis la guerre. En outre, le large éventail des publics mobilisés, des salariés aux vétérans en passant par les locataires, autour de questions variées (économiques, environnementales, etc.) révèle un tissu social local solide.

Au Kosovo, le début de l'année 2020 a été marqué par des concerts de casseroles aux fenêtres contre les manœuvres politiciennes en pleine épidémie de COVID-19. Là encore, l'opposition citoyenne n'est pas un phénomène nouveau. Elle reflète une crise politique marquée par le boycott du Parlement, où de nombreuses séances ont été interrompues par des gaz lacrymogènes. Depuis l'automne 2015, elle s'est traduite par des manifestations dans les rues et l'occupation de la place de la capitale, devant le Parlement, noires de tentes[19]. C'est dans un contexte de luttes entre les partis composant la majorité, que le président de la République a déclaré l'état d'urgence et délégué les prérogatives exécutives du pays au Conseil de sécurité, creusant les dissensions et entraînant la chute de la coalition gouvernementale, dont certains membres étaient d'ailleurs visés par des enquêtes pour corruption. La réaction des responsables politiques a toutefois mis en lumière une logique d'instrumentalisation de la pandémie à des fins de pouvoir et de déconstruction des équilibres issus des élections législatives d'octobre 2019[20], qui ont abouti au scrutin anticipé de février 2021.

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[18] Romuald COUSSOT, « Chronique 2013 de la Bosnie-Herzégovine », *Est Europa*, Institut Universitaire Varenne : https://www.est-europa.univ-pau.fr/est-europa-la-revue/dernier-numero/393-2013.html (consulté le 2 novembre 2020).

[19] Voir notamment les chroniques de l'auteur consacrées au Kosovo et publiées dans la revue *Est Europa*, Institut Universitaire Varenne : https://www.est-europa.univ-pau.fr/est-europa-en-ligne.html (consulté le 2 novembre 2020).

[20] Sébastien GRICOURT, « Kosovo : règlements de compte au temps du coronavirus », Observatoire des Balkans, Fondation Jean Jaurès, 2 avril 2020, https://jean-jaures.org/nos-productions/kosovo-reglements-de-compte-au-temps-du-coronavirus (consulté le 2 décembre 2020).

Cristallisé autour de thèmes clés de la vie politique kosovare, parmi lesquels l'accord de démarcation de la frontière commune avec le Monténégro et la création de l'Association/Communauté des municipalités serbes, mais aussi l'*accountability* des responsables politiques, le mécontentement de la population exprime un besoin de changement qui traduit une osmose des modes de contestation partagés par les militants et les citoyens.

Au Monténégro, ce sont les habitants de la région des Bouches de Kotor qui se sont dressés contre des projets de construction dans une région classée au Patrimoine mondial de l'humanité. Citons Bokobran, qui rassemble des ONG, des individus, des représentants d'institutions et des partis politiques, opposés à l'établissement d'un complexe hôtelier et la recrudescence des paquebots de croisière[21]. Société civile et élus locaux se sont ainsi élevés contre le Plan d'urbanisme spécial pour le littoral élaboré par le ministère du Développement durable et du tourisme. Ce plan, voté en 2018, après des débats publics menés dans le secret, classe tout le littoral monténégrin en zone touristique, et notamment l'île Sveti Nikola, zone naturelle protégée depuis 1952. L'enjeu de la préservation du patrimoine naturel n'est pas le seul à rassembler la population. À la capitale Podgorica, des manifestations ont ainsi été organisées pour protester contre la multiplication des violences à caractère mafieux (règlements de comptes) et la corruption à haut niveau, rappelant le « printemps social » de 2012[22].

Terminons ce tour d'horizon par la Serbie. En novembre 2018, le mouvement de protestation « 1 od 5 miliona » a débuté pour dénoncer l'attaque dont a été victime en novembre 2018 Borko Stefanović, leader du Parti de Gauche, à Krusevac. Les manifestants s'opposent au climat d'intimidation et de violences d'État qui caractérise le mandat présidentiel d'Aleksandar Vučić. Ininterrompues, ces manifestations témoignent du rejet citoyen d'un régime qui n'a eu de cesse depuis 2017 de renforcer son exercice autoritaire du pouvoir[23]. Pour autant, l'opposition politique peine

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[21] Entretien avec la présidente de Bokobran, Antonela Stjepčević, « Monténégro : les citoyens se révoltent contre le saccage des Bouches de Kotor », *Courrier des Balkans*, 2 juillet 2018.

[22] Jean-Arnault DERENS et Laurent GESLIN, « Vers un printemps des Balkans ? », *Le Temps*, 25 février 2019 : https://www.letemps.ch/monde/vers-un-printemps-balkans (consulté le 2 décembre 2020).

[23] Vlado VURUSIĆ, « Contestation.En Serbie, un air d'intifada contre le tout-puissant président Vucic », *Courrier international*, 21 juillet 2020 : https://www.courrierinternational.com/article/contestation-en-serbie-un-air-dintifada-contre-le-tout-puissant-president-vucic (consulté le 12 février 2021).

à se structurer en un front uni dans le cadre de ce que Dušan Spasojević, professeur de sciences politiques à l'université de Belgrade, a défini comme un « système autoritaire concurrentiel »[24].

Là est la difficulté de ces sursauts contestataires qui, pour être organisés et coordonnés, ne débouchent pas nécessairement sur un programme se concrétisant sur la scène politique. Si certains mouvements ont pu trouver un écho au sein des institutions, comme l'a montré la victoire de Vetëvendosje! aux élections d'octobre 2019 et de février 2021 au Kosovo, les Balkans occidentaux traversent une période incertaine où les forces vives de la société civile se heurtent aux dérives autocratiques de démocraties hésitantes[25]. L'Union européenne, de son côté, a adopté une position neutre, réaffirmant le droit des citoyens à se mobiliser tout en incitant les acteurs politiques à trouver des compromis. Son soutien se place en dehors de la sphère politique locale et son pari est celui du « Processus de Berlin »[26], un processus volontariste au service de la réconciliation régionale qui met l'accent sur les projets concrets.

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[24] Cité dans « Serbie : raz-de-marée électoral pour le parti conservateur du président », *Les Echos*, 22 juin 2020 : https://www.lesechos.fr/monde/europe/serbie-raz-de-maree-electoral-pour-le-parti-conservateur-du-president-1217289 (consulté le 2 décembre 2020).

[25] Les variantes de la démocratie occidentale trahissant le désenchantement qui a suivi la chute du Mur de Berlin sont nombreuses : de la « démocratie illibérale » du politologue américain Fareed Zakaria, à la « stabilitocratie / stabilocratie » reprise par Florian Bieber et Marko Kmezić ou les « démocratures » définies par Pierre Grémion et Pierre Hassner, en passant par la « post-démocratie » selon l'intellectuel albanais Fatos Lubonja.
Voir Fareed ZAKARIA, « The Rise of Illiberal Democracy », *Foreign Affairs*, New York : Cambridge University Press, nov/dec 1997, pp. 22-43 ; Florian BIEBER, « The Rise (and Fall) of Balkan Stabilitocracies", Center for international relations and sustainable development, Horizons, hiver 2018, n° 10 : https://www.cirsd.org/en/horizons/horizons-winter-2018-issue-no-10/the-rise-and-fall-of-balkan-stabilitocracies (consulté le 12 février 2021) ; Pierre GREMION et Pierre HASSNER, Vents d'Est, Paris : PUF, 1990 ; « Balkans : échec du projet européen, néolibéralisme et dérive autoritaire », *Courrier des Balkans*, 1er août 2020 : https://www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Balkans-l-echec-du-projet-europeen-le-neoliberalisme-et-la-derive-autoritaire (consulté le 2 décembre 2020).

[26] Voir le site officiel du Processus : https://berlinprocess.info/about/#wbsummits et les sites européens spécialisés tels que la Fondation Robert Schumann : « Union européenne-Balkans occidentaux : pour un cadre de négociations d'adhésion rénové », *Questions d'Europe*, n° 529, 30 septembre 2019 : https://www.robert-schuman.eu/fr/questions-d-europe/0529-union-europeenne-balkans-occidentaux-pour-un-cadre-de-negociations-d-adhesion-renove et Euractiv : Julija SIMIĆ, « Avec Berlin Plus, l'UE tente d'envoyer un signal aux Balkans », 9 juin 2017 : https://www.euractiv.fr/section/elargissement/news/berlin-plus-eu-signals-western-balkans-still-a-priority/. (liens consultés le 12 février 2021).

Au-delà des idiosyncrasies nationales, les mouvements citoyens des États balkaniques témoignent de la vivacité des populations qui utilisent les outils que leur offrent des démocraties, même « illibérales », pour faire entendre leurs revendications et s'opposer à l'arbitraire du pouvoir. Si la victoire n'est pas assurée, ils rappellent que les processus de construction démocratique ne sont pas seulement inscrits dans le marbre des textes, mais également enrichis par la pratique de chacun.

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IN WESTERN BALKANS: AN ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AREA

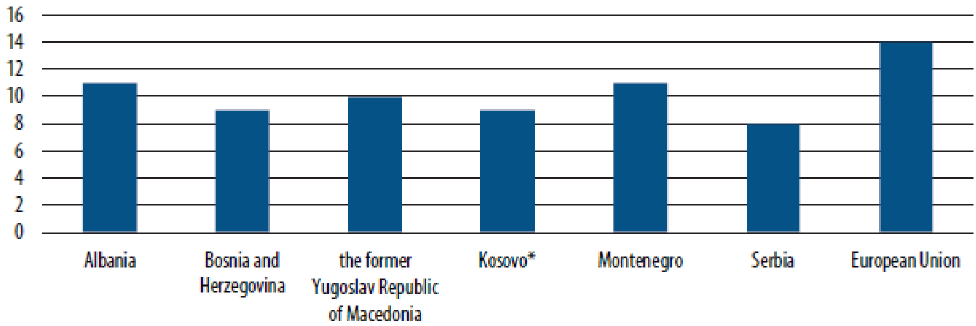
Diana-Gabriela Reianu

Introduction

Public administration is one of the areas subject to reform in countries that have a candidate status (are in the process of 'transposing' EU legislation into national law) or are potential candidates (who have a clear prospect of EU membership in the future but have not yet been granted candidate status). Among the countries of the Western Balkans, Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are currently candidate countries, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates. Therefore, our analysis is focused on these six countries and their progress in one area of public administration, namely, public procurement, an important focus of discussion at European level, considered as having a key role in ensuring a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth in Europe, mainly through an efficient use of public funds, but also an important focus of discussion at national level, as an essential tool in achieving governmental goals.

At European level, the main objectives established in this specific area of public procurement are to bring higher efficiency and easier participation in procurement procedures, to modernize public services and to reduce administrative burden, to address societal issues through public procurement and to prevent corruption by creating a culture of integrity and fair play. Therefore, new rules were adopted at the EU level in 2014, but their success depends mainly on their effective enforcement at the national level. Hence, public procurement is an area of public administration monitored by the European Commission in Western Balkan countries, an area that affects all citizens, which can bring economic, social, and environmental benefits. These benefits are supposed to be large as the size of public procurement in Western Balkan countries, in terms of GDP, represents between 8 and 11 percent, a high proportion that triggers the need to have an efficient, transparent and cost-effective public procurement system.

Figure 1. Public procurement share of GDP in Western Balkans



Source: The National Supreme Audit Offices, Statistical Agencies and Public Procurement Agencies *apud* European Court of Auditors, *Public Procurement in Western Balkans*, Luxembourg/Stockholm, 2018, p. 16

As a general rule, the European Union Directive on public procurement specifies that "the award of public contracts by or on behalf of Member States' authorities has to comply with the principles of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular the free movement of goods, freedom of establishment and the freedom to provide services, as well as the principles deriving therefrom, such as equal treatment, non-discrimination, mutual recognition, proportionality and transparency"[1]. In particular, the EU official documents mention that the Western Balkan countries should substantially increase the transparency, competitiveness, and fairness of public procurement procedures, an area particularly prone to corruption, they should limit the use of confidential procedures for procuring goods and introduce safeguards excluding political influence on bidders, and they should also introduce publicly accessible e-procurement that would enable citizens to see clearly how public money are being spent.[2]

Hence, this study aims to emphasize the state of play and the efforts made by each country under evaluation in transposing the current EU

[1] "Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC", *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 94, 28.3.2014, p. 65 .

[2] European Commission, *A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans*, Strasbourg, 6.2.2018, COM(2018) 65 final, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf, accessed on January 23, 2021.

public procurement directives and the extent to which national legislation reflects EU principles. In addition, we will address the challenges and issues that are still problematic at each country level. In this regard, the analysis includes an examination of the legal framework and the extent to which it ensures the transparency of procurement opportunities and equal access of economic operators to public procurement, an investigation of contract management, and evidence of monitoring and evaluation of the procurement process. We will thus analyze the implementation and observance of the declared principles, the effective enforcement, and the success of the new legislation at each national level.

We have structured the paper into three sections, presenting first the rules that apply at European level, then the achievements of the Balkan states, and, finally, the main problems encountered, facing the truth that challenges remain. We based our research mainly on legal documents, national monitors, and public opinion reports for each country under evaluation, communications and reports published by European Commission, SIGMA3 and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), scientific research articles and other official documents.

Public Procurement: EU legislation

Public procurement refers "to the process by which public authorities, such as government departments or local authorities, purchase work, goods or services from companies"[4], a sector in which EU law sets out minimum rules that need to be transposed into national legislation and applied to tenders whose value exceeds a certain amount. Public procurement is an important area which needs to follow harmonised rules because in many sectors public authorities are the principal buyers (such as energy, transport, or social protection), and through procurement the public sector can boost the economy and can assure high-quality public services.

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[3] SIGMA – Support for Improvement in Governance and Management is a joint initiative of the OECD and the EU.

[4] European Commission, *Public Procurement*, https://ec.europa.eu/growth/single-market/public-procurement_en.

The EU public procurement directives are legal instruments through which the European Union tries to achieve a competitive, open, and well-regulated procurement market, to make it easier and cheaper for small and medium-sized enterprises to bid for public contracts, to ensure the best value for money for public purchases and to respect the principles of transparency and competition. Therefore, the European Union adopted in 2014 new directives on public procurement, which set the proper framework and try to simplify the procedures, to bring innovation and to place an emphasis on social and environmental considerations. We refer here to Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement, Directive 2014/25/EU on procurement by entities operating in the water, energy, transport, and postal services sectors, and Directive 2014/23/EU on the award of concession contracts, which replaced the classical public sector directive (Directive 2004/18/EC) and the utilities directive (Directive 2004/17/EC). These new rules intend to bring less bureaucracy and higher efficiency, but their success depends on the effective enforcement in Member States and the readiness of the public buyers to benefit from the digital revolution, to cut red tape and to make procurement processes more efficient and more business-friendly to the benefit of all citizens.

Moreover, in October 2017, the European Commission presented a public procurement strategy which sets out the overall policy framework and defines clear priorities to improve procurement in practice. The strategy focuses on six strategic policy priorities and aims to improve access to public procurement, to boost the digital transformation of procurement, to bring flexibility, integrity, and transparency, to obtain better value for public money, to deliver better outcomes and to reduce fraud and corruption.[5]

As a legal obligation for candidate countries to harmonize domestic law with EU law, Western Balkan states are also required to bring the legislation in complete conformity with the *acquis*, the European Commission being responsible for monitoring that the regulatory procurement framework in these countries is properly implemented and that the institutions and administrative capacity have been put in place. At present, most of the candidate and potential candidate countries have

[5] *Idem*, *Making Public Procurement work in and for Europe*, Strasbourg, 3.10.2017, COM(2017) 572 final, https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/25612/attachments/1/translations/en/renditions/native, accessed on January 23, 2021.

already granted market access for public contracts through Stabilisation and Association Agreements. These agreements constitute the framework of relations between the European Union and the Western Balkan countries, being adapted to the specific situation of each partner country and serving as the basis for implementation of the accession process.

Achievements of Western Balkan countries

Public procurement is a complex subject that "cuts across all sectors of economy and society"[6], being a system for spending public money that involves a multitude of stakeholders, specific rules, and multiple activities, from the identification of inputs needed for implementing public projects to the selection of suppliers, contract management, use and maintenance of public procurement. Therefore, to present the progress made by the Western Balkan countries in the field of public procurement, we will examine the actions taken by each country in each phase of the policy cycle: formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. We will analyze the existence and activity of the main actors involved in this process, the existence of legal documents and their compliance with the European law, the application of laws and strategies, and the efforts made toward monitoring and evaluation of public procurement procedures.

a) Institutional and legislative framework

At a country level analysis, it can be seen that Montenegro and Serbia remark themselves through the existence of a legislative framework for public procurement and a comprehensive institutional set-up. In Montenegro, since January 2019, the competences in the area of public procurement were transferred from the Public Procurement Agency to the Ministry of Finance, this institution being currently responsible for policy formulation, legislation and implementation of the public procurement system and concessions. Within the ministry, the Directorate for Public Procurement Policy comprises five departments, each one of them with specific functions and roles (regulatory / monitoring / training / improvement). Additionally, the institutional set-up is in place for handling complaints, such as the State Commission for the Review of Public Procurement Procedures is the independent institution in charge of the review process. A positive outcome was noted in the work of the State

[6] Naushad Khan, *Public Procurement Fundamentals,* Emerald Publishing, 2018, p. XIII.

Commission, which in recent years has seen a significant decrease in the number of complaints filled and a significant reduction in the processing time for decision-making on complaints. For example, compared to 2017 when 973 appeals were received by this institution, in 2018 only 453 appeals were registered, mainly due to improvements in legislation and more efficient procedures.[7] Moreover, the legal compliance of public procurement procedures is verified by the public procurement section of the Administration for Inspection Affairs, which carries out inspection controls. Data show that in 2018 this institution inspected 351 contracting authorities, a higher number than in the previous year (in 2017 only 220 contracting authorities were verified), mainly due to improvements in the number of specialized staff responsible for inspections.[8]

Likewise, in Serbia, the Public Procurement Office is in charge with monitoring the application of the Public Procurement Law, with the functioning of the Public Procurement Portal and with improving and managing the public procurement procedures. In addition, the State Audit Institution, the supreme authority for auditing of public funds, an independent state authority that plays a major role in strengthening the accountability of those mandated in public functions, continues to improve the quality of its activities and its commitment to high professionalism by applying the latest standards and good audit practices with the necessary preservation of the independence of the institution and auditors. The Annual Activity Report mentions that the State Audit Institution produced in 2018 a total of 436 audit reports and 2,130 recommendations, such as the financial effects were achieved in the amount of RSD 253.14 million in increased revenues and RSD 480.58 million in reduced expenditures.[9]

In Albania, the public financial management reform is being led by the Ministry of Finance and Economy, while the Public Procurement Agency is the central institution responsible for the well-going of the public procurement system, being the central body with legal personality

[7] OECD, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public administration Montenegro 2019*, SIGMA, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019, p. 30, http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2019-Montenegro.pdf, accessed on December 2, 2020.

[8] *Ibidem*, p. 26.

[9] For details see Republic of Serbia, State Audit Institution, *Strategic Plan of the State Audit Institution for the period 2019-2023*, Belgrade, http://www.dri.rs/documents/strategic-plan.180.html, accessed on January 25, 2021; *Idem*, *2018 Activity Report State Audit Institution*, Belgrade, March 2019, p. 9, http://www.dri.rs/documents/annual-activity-reports.181.html, accessed on January 25, 2021.

reporting to the Prime Minister, and financed by the State Budget. The Annual Report of this institution mentions that, during 2019, 347 cases were presented in a written form to the Public Procurement Agency by different institutions for opinion, clarification or information on issues related to the public procurement process and 380 of the electronic requests were reviewed, compared to 2018 when only 250 requests were handled, which shows the commitment of this agency to immediate reviews of any requests.[10]

Table 1. Cases reviewed by Public Procurement Agency of Albania in 2019

Type of request	Number
Request for providing opinions/clarification/communication with other institutions in writing	142
Request for providing opinions/clarification/communication with other institutions electronically	380
Request for giving opinions on submitted draft decisions / draft laws	9
Verifications requested by the Classified Information Security Directorate	25
Certificates issued to economic operators, which are not in the process of being excluded	48
Requests made by the Prosecution Office of the District Courts / different institutions	35
Complaints of economic operators	88
Total	**727**

Source: Republic of Albania, Public Procurement Agency, *Annual Report 2019*, March 2020, p. 69, http://www.app.gov.al/about-us/annual-reports/, accessed on January 29, 2021

Moreover, the Public Procurement Agency tried to improve the public procurement system in Albania by enhancing transparency and reducing negotiated procurement procedures without prior publication of

[10] Republic of Albania, Public Procurement Agency, *Annual Report 2019*, pp. 68-69.

contract notice, considered as one of the less transparent types of procurement procedure where competition is limited. Thus, the number of these types of procedures has decreased significantly during 2019, mainly as a result of a series of continuous recommendations and notifications given by the Public Procurement Agency and due to the electronic procurement system. If in 2009 the number of such procedures registered 1,182 cases, in 2019 this number decreased to 192[11]. The advance is also visible compared to the previous year, such as the number of negotiated procedures without prior publication of the contract notice "has decreased significantly during 2019 from 9.4% of procedures awarded in 2018 to 3.2% awarded in 2019"[12].

Likewise, in North Macedonia, the supervision and enforcement of the public procurement system are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance and the Public Procurement Bureau, as well as the State Appeals Commission as an independent body authorized to rule on the review procedures in public procurement. Data show progress on bringing the national legislation in line with the 2014 EU directives, but deficiencies in improving budget transparency and a shortcoming in strategic planning with no comprehensive strategy for public procurement and corresponding action plans.[13]

On the other side, Bosnia and Herzegovina is far behind in this regard. The reports acknowledge that "a country-wide public financial management reform strategy has yet to be developed and adopted to ensure a common reform direction on public financial management"[14]. Moreover, the country has not yet achieved sufficient budget transparency, mainly due to incomplete available budgetary information. Similarly, Kosovo appears to be at the end of the spectrum, with delays in bringing procurement activities into compliance with EU requirements and best practices. The institutions responsible to regulate public procurement in Kosovo are the Public Procurement Regulatory Commission, the

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[11] *Ibidem*, p. 39.

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 6.

[13] OECD, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public administration North Macedonia 2019*, SIGMA, Paris: OECD Publishing, 2019, p. 24, http://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2019-North-Macedonia.pdf, accessed on November 23, 2020.

[14] European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 Report, 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, Brussels, 6.10.2020, SWD(2020) 350 final, p. 13.

Procurement Review Body and the Central Procurement Agency within the Government of Kosovo. The Public Procurement Regulatory Commission acts in the capacity of an independent regulatory agency, being responsible for the development, operation, and oversight of the Public Procurement System, for the design and distribution of secondary legislation and recommendations. The Procurement Review Body is responsible for the review of administrative decisions and appeals from bidders under the review procedure. The Central Procurement Agency operates as an agency under the Ministry of Finance with broad responsibilities concerning procurement procedures at the central level.

Concerning the legislative framework of public procurement in Western Balkans, the developments in this field were mainly limited by delays in adopting the specific legislation and no full harmonization of legislation with the European Union *acquis*. Besides the delays in adopting the Public Procurement Law in Montenegro, the 2014 Directives have not yet been fully transposed in the national legislation. Monitoring reports show that the 2017 amendments to the law excluded defence and security-related procurement from this regulation, which do not include dynamic tools such as purchasing system e-catalogues and e-auctions, and cover some areas that are not part of the *acquis*.[15] Furthermore, it allowed contracts to be awarded without formal competition in urgent procurement cases, which determined that in 2017, in the second half of the year, a number of 1,143 contracts to be awarded through this kind of method (19.15% of all contracts awarded).[16] On the other hand, the 2017 amendments removed the "shopping method" and introduced higher thresholds for low-value contracts, raising the low amount of EUR 5,000 to EUR 15,000 for supply and service contracts, and EUR 30,000 for work contracts. As a result, in the second half of 2017, the awarded low-value contracts constituted 5.41% of the total public procurement spending in that period[17]. Moreover, the Public Procurement Law does not provide for remedies in cases of low-value contracts and urgent procurement, therefore not being fully compliant with the Remedies Directives whose main role is to ensure that effective means of redress are available when an economic

[15] OECD*, Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public administration Montenegro 2019*, p. 22.
[16] *Ibidem*, p. 23.
[17] *Ibidem.*

operator that has an interest in a public procurement procedure believes that it has been run without proper application of the legislation.

Overall, in Montenegro, in the 2019 assessment, most of the indicator values for public procurement have not changed since the 2017 assessment (table 2). A small increase can be observed in the indicator representing efficiency, non-discrimination, transparency, and equal treatment practiced in public procurement operations, mainly due to the improvements made in legislation and procedures, but the value of this indicator is still very low, indicating big problems with procurement, especially with "small" public acquisitions, not enough transparency and reliability in the whole process and lack of inclusiveness.

Table 2. Indicators for Public Procurement

Indicators	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Quality of legislative framework for public procurement and PPPs/concessions				□◆		
Central institutional and administrative capacity to develop, implement and monitor public procurement policy effectively and efficiently				□◆		
Independence, timeliness and competence of the complaints handling system			□◆			
Efficiency, non-discrimination, transparency and equal treatment practiced in public procurement operations		□	◆			
Legend: □ 2017 indicator value ◆ 2019 indicator value						

Source: OECD, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public administration Montenegro 2019*, p. 21

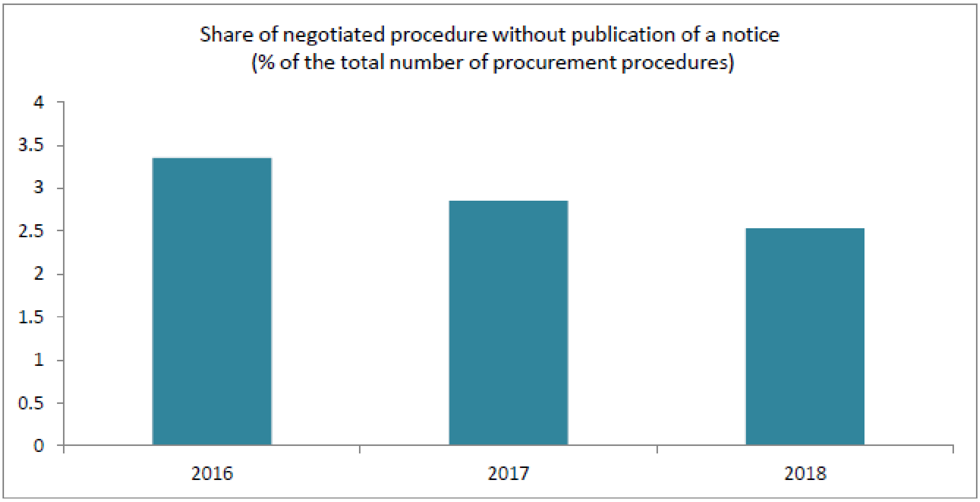
According to national reports and data published on official websites in Serbia, the legislative framework for public procurement and for conducting financial control was strengthened, mainly based on the Public Procurement Law (Official Gazette of the RS, No. 124/12, 14/15 and 68/15), which entered into force in January 2013, and on relevant secondary legislation. The law governs the planning of public procurement, conditions, manners and procedures, the centralization of public procurement, and the manner of recording data and protecting the rights. Moreover, the new Public Procurement Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No.

91/19) came into force on 1 January 2020 and brought a reduction and simplification of public procurement procedures, reduction of administrative burden and costs of participation in procedures. Furthermore, to enhance transparency, at the beginning of 2021, the Public Procurement Office conducted a public debate on the Proposal of the Action Plan for 2021 for the implementation of the Public Procurement Development Program for the period 2019-2023.

Similar actions were taken in North Macedonia, where significant progress has been made in the area of public procurement, especially in public procurement procedures. On January 2019, the Parliament of North Macedonia adopted the new Law on Public Procurement, which transposed the current EU public procurement directives. The law has been published in the Official Gazette no. 24/2019 and was implemented on April 2019. Besides the primary legislation, there were also decisions taken at the national level to eliminate the inefficiencies and shortcomings of the previous legislation, like the mandatory application of electronic auctions and the use of the lowest price as the sole criteria for awarding the contracts, which became optional for contracting authorities. Data show a downward trend for the negotiated procedures without prior publication of a notice (figure 2) and a continued decrease in the share of noncompetitive procedures. The report mentions that "the legal requirement to use the lowest price award criterion in most circumstances (only a few exceptions were allowed) was a major weakness of the country's public procurement system and its negative effect was fully felt in the market in 2018; for more than 99% of competitive procedures, contracting authorities awarded contracts based on the lowest-price criterion only."[18]

[18] OECD, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public administration North Macedonia 2019*, pp. 27-28.

Figure 2 Negotiated procedure without prior publication of notice



Source: Public Procurement Office, Annual Report, *apud* OECD, *Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public administration North Macedonia 2019*, p. 28

Similar situation appears in Albania, where in 2019, to evaluate the winning bid, the Contracting Authorities used the lowest bid price in 98.3% of cases (5,605 cases out of 5,703), while only in 1.7% of cases (98 cases out of 5,703) the evaluation method of "Awarded procedures with the most economically advantageous tenders" has been applied[19]. Hence, to increase the quality of public contracts, the legislative framework must emphasize the application of "the Most Economically Advantageous Tender" method as an evaluation criterion, identified on the basis of price and cost, using the cost-effectiveness method. The main laws that guide the public procurement process in Albania are Law no. 9643/2006 on public procurement, Law no. 125/2013 on concessions and public private partnership, and Law no. 9874/2008 on public auction, published on the Public Procurement Agency's portal[20].

In Kosovo, the main legislation in the field of public procurement consists of the Law No. 04/L-042 on Public Procurement, as amended by the Law No. 04/L-237, Law No. 05/L-068 and Law No. 05/L-092, completed

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[19] Republic of Albania, Public Procurement Agency, *Annual Report 2019*, pp. 24-25.

[20] Republic of Albania, Public Procurement Agency's portal, http://www.app.gov.al/legislation/public-procurement/law/, accessed on January 29, 2021.

by a significant number of secondary legislation that enables implementation of the law, including standard forms for each type of notice, code of ethics, the standard forms of tender files, a form for filing complaints to the Procurement Review Body and instructions for procedures with minimal value. The report of Ministry of Finance mentions delays in drafting and approving the new public procurement law and the issuance of new sub-legal acts for its implementation, as well as delays in advancing and strengthening the e-procurement system.[21] Bosnia and Herzegovina is in a similar situation, where the Public Procurement Law dates from 2014 (Official Gazette of BIH No. 39/14) and the Public Procurement Agency is moving now in the direction of continuing the procedure of the Draft Law on Amendments to Public Procurement Law. In this regard, the European Commission's Communication from October 2020 mentions that "the country needs to align its legislation with the EU acquis in the area of public procurement and utilities and start the alignment process for concessions where the legal framework is highly fragmented and needs to be harmonised to eliminate overlaps, inconsistencies and uncertainties."[22]

b) Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

In the public policy making process, the implementation is a crucial stage in the realization of the policy process, because the implementation is about the application of principles in practice and will ultimately determine the success or failure of a policy. No matter how well a public policy is formulated, if it is poorly implemented, the result will not be achieved and the whole effort will be in vain. Therefore, after examining the institutional and legislative framework in countries of the Western Balkans, our analysis should focus on the implementation of the public procurement policy in each country, as well as on monitoring and evaluation. At first glance, it can be seen in the country reports that the most critical issues and concerns are related to this stage of implementation and what follows this stage, the evaluation and monitoring of results. While the Western Balkan countries have done their utmost to establish the

[21] Ministry of Finance, *Implementation Report of Public Administration Reform: Public Finance Management Reform Strategy 2016-2020 during period January – September 2020*, Pristina, Kosovo, 2020, pp. 10-11 and 19-20, https://mf.rks-gov.net/desk/inc/media/56B47DA6-0475-4A99-BBB5-409A66A32E4E.pdf, accessed on January 29, 2021.

[22] European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 Report...*, p. 63.

institutional and legislative framework to ensure the harmonization of national legislation, most problems arise in the pace and manner of implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Apart from the delays, difficulties, and problems encountered in this area by most of the countries under evaluation, we have to acknowledge the efforts and progress made in offering a central electronic public procurement portal, in publishing essential documents needed in different procedures, in improving the capacity to manage public procurement processes, or in strengthening the monitoring system to assess procurement performance. Therefore, the European Commission remarked the efforts made by Serbia in the implementation of e-procurement tools and the improvement in the capacity to manage public procurement processes "with the certification of 481 procurement officers in 2019", while the irregularities found by the State Audit Institution in 2019 decreased to 9.6% of the inspected procuring entities, compared to 12.1% in 2018.[23] Likewise, in Albania, on the monitoring of contract awarding and implementation, "the number of negotiated procedures without prior publication continued to fall significantly in 2019 (to 192, from 531 in 2018 and 2,234 in 2017)" and the country "has a central electronic public procurement portal on which it publishes tender and contract notices, and other important information and guidance. Use of the portal is mandatory, including for low-value procurement. Standard tendering documents for each type of procedure and contract are published on the Public Procurement Agency website, and the procurement forecast register is prepared and posted online. […] The Public Procurement Agency has recently strengthened its monitoring role, and applies a monitoring system to assess procurement performance, procurement compliance and, since 2019, contract implementation, with information available for 1,006 contracts."[24] North Macedonia stands out through its progress on improving budget transparency, through various budgetary reports and data that are published monthly or quarterly on the Ministry of Finance's website[25]. In the field of implementation, the electronic system of public

[23] European Commission, *Serbia 2020 Report, 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, Brussels, 6.10.2020, SWD(2020) 352 final, p. 74.

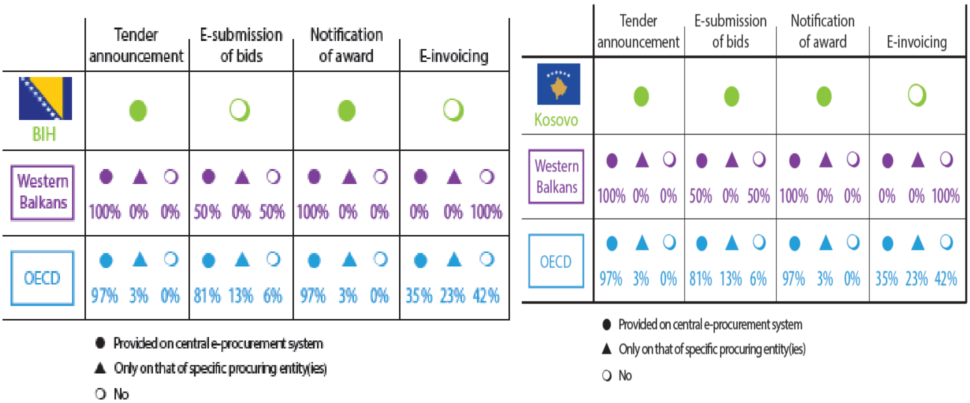
[24] European Commission, *Albania 2020 Report, 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, Brussels, 6.10.2020, SWD(2020) 354 final, pp. 68-69.

[25] Republic of North Macedonia, Ministry of Finance, https://arhiva.finance.gov.mk/en, accessed on January 29, 2021.

procurement provides the basic framework for ensuring transparency, so it gives equal access to economic operators to public procurement procedures. All notices and documents involved in the procedure should be published on this electronic system and the publication of contract notices and contract award notices are automatically published.[26]

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, tender and contract notices are published on the central procurement portal, and the e-procurement system is enhanced with additional functionalities. The electronic procurement system enables any interested person to download documents. In both countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, the functionalities provided by the e-procurement system exist on the central level for tender announcement and notification of awards (figure 3).

Figure 3. Functionalities provided by the e-procurement system (2019)



Source: OECD, *Government at a Glance: Western Balkans 2020. Country Fact Sheet*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2020

Challenges and critical issues

Despite legislative and institutional progress, Western Balkan countries face major problems mainly in the area of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public procurement. Main concerns regard issues such as: contract splitting by contracting authorities, inconsistent advertising and conduct practices, increased use of directly awarded

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[26] Public Procurement Bureau manages and operates the Electronic System for Public Procurement (ESPP) available on the Internet website https://e-nabavki.gov.mk.

contracts, reduced transparency, and the impact of lack of advertising on competition.

In Serbia, for example, the recommendations are to apply "the public procurement procedures to all capital investments regardless of the type of investment or the source of financing, and ensure that procedures are in place to guarantee the integration of capital projects' planning and appraisal in the budget process"[27]. Furthermore, the country needs to improve the government's investment planning and management capacity, "including the capacity to control public assets funded by loans from third countries"[28]. This practice of conclusion of contracts that contain an obligation to hire a particular provider or contractor or to bypass the law is commonly seen in the region and it needs to be monitored and regulated. In all cases of public procurement, the law on public procurement should be applied, and there should be a fully compliance with European Union standards. The projects on infrastructure financed by loans provided by third countries should not be accompanied by agreements that would assign the contract directly to companies from these countries; those acquisitions of public works / goods / services should be realized through a transparent and non-discriminatory procedure. Moreover, this country still faces an increased share of open procedures and the dominance of the lowest price criterion in public procurement procedures.

In Montenegro, "contract management and ex-post evaluation of procurement processes is still very rare"[29], thus the government has to improve the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of public procurement and improve the administrative capacity to address these shortcomings. Because monitoring and evaluation are poor, so it is the reviewing and learning process that could occur based on these procedures. Furthermore, **e**-procurement in Montenegro has not yet been implemented.

In North Macedonia, despite the past achievements, a few inconsistencies with *acquis* persist in the Public Procurement Law. Most concerns are related to the "negative list" of economic operators and a lack of equivalent provisions related to the "self-cleaning" mechanism. The Law provides for a number of situations where the contracting authority shall

[27] European Commission, *Serbia 2020 Report...*, p. 15.

[28] *Ibidem.*

[29] European Commission, *Montenegro 2020 Report, 2020 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy*, Brussels, 6.10.2020, SWD(2020) 353 final, p. 77.

exclude tenders or candidates from the contract award procedure, but the national law should provide for a maximum duration for such exclusions to comply with the provisions of the Directive[30]. Contract management is weak in North Macedonia, while the implementation of public procurement policy is poor. There are registered overruns, costs, and delays in the implementation. The process lacks dynamism and efficiency. There is no evidence of systematic ex-post evaluation of the procurement process or of contract management.

In Albania, various shortcomings and violations of the public procurement law provisions committed by the Contracting Authorities were identified during investigations carried by specialized agencies. It has been noticed that in several cases the Contracting Authorities failed to provide argumentation / explanations for technical specifications, to match the prices used in the bill of quantity with the prices set out in the official manuals, or to provide an explanation of the qualification criteria (omissions that run against the procurement rules and found in most of the verified procurement procedures)[31]. These shortcomings are mainly due to frequent changes in legislation, different interpretation of the law by civil servants, no harmonization among procedures, problems in deciding the upper spending limit, and lack of expertise.

Major improvements must also be made in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where the legislative framework has to be developed, and a reform strategy in public financial management has to be adopted to ensure a common direction. The reports show insufficient internal audit capacity of national institutions and inadequate internal controls. The urgent need is to target reforms in the health sector and in the management of public enterprises to increase transparency, fiscal sustainability, and efficiency. The European Commission Report shows that "there was serious backsliding resulting from the extension of preferential treatment for domestic bidders in awarding public contracts during the reporting period, in breach of the commitments of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the EU"[32].

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[30] For details see *Directive 2014/24/EU on public procurement*, p. 85, and Republic of North Macedonia, *Law on Public Procurement*, "Official Gazette" No. 24/2019.

[31] Republic of Albania, Public Procurement Agency, *Annual Report 2019*, pp. 79-81.

[32] European Commission, *Bosnia and Herzegovina 2020 Report...*, p. 63.

In Kosovo, there is a Public Financial Management Strategy and an Action Plan, but contract implementation remains prone to irregularities and vulnerable to corruption. The implementation of procurement procedures continues to be one of the most problematic issues. There are a lot of complaints that show the dissatisfaction of economic operators, and the audit identified that "during 2019 almost no contracting authority has fully implemented the planned procurement activities, but at the same time they entered into numerous contracts outside the procurement plan"[33]. Moreover, individual audit reports have highlighted shortcomings and weaknesses in procurement procedures, starting from procurement planning, development of procurement procedures, up to contract management and implementation, in most contracting authorities. There were public authorities that entered into contractual liabilities by signing contracts without sufficient budget available or without drafting the executive project. Others entered into contracts by noncomplying with procurement procedures, by awarding the contract to economic operators who have not met the eligibility requirements. In the implementation phase, some authorities failed to appoint contract managers or failed to appoint members from the central level as an integral part of the bid evaluation commissions in the procurement processes developed in projects co-financed with the local level.[34] In addition, the National Audit Office reported malpractices in implementation and deviations from the procurement rules within ministries, by signing of contracts for construction without prior application for a construction permit, non-compliance with the legal requirements for forfeiting tender security in cases when required, or signing of unlawful annex contracts for services, practices that affect the principles of transparency and competition[35].

One major concern related to public procurement in all Western Balkan countries is corruption, so that the purpose of regulating the public procurement system includes the fight against corruption, because

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[33] Republic of Kosovo, National Audit Office, *Annual Audit Report for year 2019*, Prishtina, August 2020, p. 80, http://www.zka-rks.org/en/publications/, accessed on January 29, 2021.

[34] *Ibidem*, pp. 81-82.

[35] For details see Republic of Kosovo, National Audit Office, *Audit Report on the Annual Financial Statements of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology for the year 2019*, Prishtina, July 2020, pp. 18-24, http://www.zka-rks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Raporti-i-auditimit-MASHT-2019-Eng.pdf, accessed on January 29, 2021.

corruption related to these procedures does represent a loss of public money and leads to the procurement of goods, services and works that do not comply with the requirements and needs of public authorities, being mainly provided at increased operating costs and at a lower level of quality. Data show that on a scale from zero to 100, where zero indicates a perceived highly corrupt public sector and 100 a very clean one, the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index scores 35 for Bosnia and Herzegovina and North Macedonia, 36 for Albania and Kosovo, while Serbia and Montenegro registered higher scores, 38 and 45, respectively.[36] Therefore, corruption is a major issue in the region and the public procurement system in the Western Balkans is one of the critical corruption zones, where the system serves to transfer public money to private entities. Some examples of corruption actions practiced in the public system and mentioned in the scientific literature, national reports, and media are: procuring goods and services which exceed the actual needs or are not necessary in terms of content, quantity or quality; unrealistic value estimates; fragmentation of large-scale procurement procedures into a series of smaller ones to be able to apply the procedure for low-value public procurement; defining the items subject to procurement in such a way as to ensure that only a particular bidder will be able to execute the contract; unjustified use of the negotiated procedure for reasons of urgency; discriminatory requirements for the participation of bidders etc.[37]

Conclusions

In conclusion, as the main findings, data analysis suggests that the six countries under evaluation find themselves at different stages in the public procurement process, with problems in every step of the process,

[36] See Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index 2020*, www.transparency.org/cpi, accessed on February 9, 2021.

[37] For details see: S. Varinac, I. Ninić, *Public Procurement Corruption Map in the Republic of Serbia*, OSCE: Belgrade, 2014; "Serbian government's procurement of medical equipment during the pandemic still a secret", *European Western Balkans*, 25 September 2020, https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/09/25/serbian-governments-procurement-of-medical-equipment-during-the-pandemic-still-a-secret/; Nikola Cuckić, "Reforming public procurement crucial for fighting corruption in the Western Balkans", *European Western Balkans*, 20 March 2020, https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2020/03/20/reforming-public-procurement-crucial-for-fighting-corruption-in-the-western-balkans/, accessed on February 9, 2020.

from weak planning of procurement to poor contract implementation and monitoring. There were contracting authorities who either signed procurement contracts without sufficient budget available or without drafting the executive project, or entered into contracts by awarding the contract to economic operators who have not met the requirements, or used frequent and unjustified exceptions to avoid the implementation of the law. Reports highlight fraud and corruption as the main cause of improper public procurement procedures, but there were also common weaknesses that relate to delays in various steps, such as untimeliness, unpreparedness, and lack of expertise.

In addition, another significant issue in the region is the very low level of competition in public tenders, a high percentage of negotiating procedures or direct contracts, and a high number of tenders with only one bidder. Therefore, a problem that also raises worries is the decreasing number of bidders, which is a main indicator of the competitiveness of the public procurement process. The causes of this situation could be frequent changes in legislation, difficult formal requirements, lack of trust or the existence of a formal number of providers, issues that must be addressed by public authorities.

Hence, authorities should focus on a proper coordination between different stages of the public procurement process and ensure the application of rules and procedures. Malpractices such as poor implementation, the use of "emergency procedures" or the annulment of tenders bring delays, costs, less confidence, and dissatisfaction among economic operators, and indicate lack of transparency, a failure to provide equal opportunities for all bidders, and, in the end, less cost-effective and of lower quality process.

Therefore, much progress remains to be made in the area of public procurement in the Western Balkans and a strong recommendation is that contracting authorities to address the shortcomings, to ensure effective and efficient procurement of goods, works and services, through proper coordination between the legal framework, the institutional one, management, monitoring, and control. Legislation should be applied properly in public procurement procedures, the institutions should optimize their administrative capacities and expertise, and they must put greater effort in implementing the rules, in learning based on monitoring and evaluation results. The goals of public authorities should be to bring higher efficiency and easier participation in the public procurement

process, to modernize public services and to reduce administrative burden, to address societal challenges, and to ensure that existing legislation is properly implemented and enforced.

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THE EUROPEANIZATION OF INTEREST GROUPS IN WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

Miruna A. Balosin

Introduction

Europeanization includes actors as interest groups at all levels from regional to European. Western Balkans interest groups capture a common element regardless of the nature of the actions, the way they act, and by what means, namely to influence government policies. Despite the process of accession in the European Union, the process of Europeanization of these interest groups is at the beginning. There is no interest group culture and the region does not know how to benefit from opening up to other structural identities, especially the European ones. The Europeanization has a transformative power, but there are no indications on the specific methods or strategies on how the Western Balkans interest groups can become active and recognised on the EU scene. The emergence of interest groups can become a precondition of successful democratization and an important step in the process of Europeanization.

To quote the few "when compared to studies of electoral systems, legislatives and party politics, the research on interest groups remains under-published due to a much smaller scholars' community working on the topic"[1]. Researchers have shown a special interest to EU member states, leaving out/overlooking one of the areas of the moment: the Western Balkans.

The acknowledgment of interest representation is a key-matter for future democracies. A reliable example is the Western Balkans area, which tries to obtain the status of viable 21st century democracy. The interest representation embodies the missing link for speeding up this process and improving the European recognition.

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[1] Patrycja Rozbicka, Paweł Kamiński, Meta Novak, Vaida Jankauskaitė, *Achieving Democracy through Interest Representation: Interest Groups in Central and Eastern Europe*, Springer Nature, 2020, p. 1.

I must disagree with the authors mentioning that the Europeanization of the Western Balkans has become a major research topic[2] for scholars trying to analyse the transformative power of the EU. After a preliminary research, the studies regarding the Europeanization of countries on the verge of accession in the EU are limited and provided by local authors. The same situation applies to topics dedicated to the Western Balkans civil society.

Europeanization is an opened term, allowing different approaches. An accepted definition belongs to Claudio Radaelli. He describes Europeanization as "processes of (a) construction, (b) diffusion, and (c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things', and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in making of EU public policy and politics and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies"[3].

According to Radaelli's vision, Europeanization should not become a bridge of communication/a gap between EU and non-EU member states, still for most scholars Europeanization implies only the European Union.

The concept of interest groups refers to associations of individuals or organizations or public or private institutions, which share values and/or concerns and attempt to influence public policy in their favour, but do not wish to control the institutions of government in a formal way[4]. Interest groups or nonstate actors are the principal structures of organized society beyond government and public administration[5].

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[2] Martin Mendelski, "Foreword to Europeanization of Western Balkans (December 29, 2018). Europeanization of Western Balkans (edited by Vladimir Vučković and Vladimir Đorđević, 2019, Forthcoming)", http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3307899, 20.01.2021, p. 2.

[3] Claudio M. Radaelli, "The Europeanization of Public Policy" in K. Featherstone and C. M. Radaelli (eds.), *The Politics of Europeanization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 30.

[4] Danica Fink-Hafner, Clive S. Thomas, "Interest groups and public affairs in the contemporary Balkans: Project overview and preliminary explanations", in *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19: e1716, 2019, pp. 1-11 https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1716 , 05.01.2021, p. 4.

[5] Karolina Borońska-Hryniewiecka, "Europeanization of non-state actors: towards a framework for analysis", in David Armstrong, Valeria Bello, Julie Gilson and Debora Spini (eds.), *Civil Society and International Governance. The role of non-state actors in global and regional regulatory frameworks*, London: Routledge, 2010., p. 74.

The inclusion of interest groups in the policy-making process brings valuable knowledge, insights, and data on specific issues, warns about poorly deliberated and difficult to implement public policies, prevents corruption and holds the government accountable. These reasons transform the presence of interest groups in the decision-making process into a necessity. Still, it is difficult to notice the presence or involvement of interest groups in national policy-making, except at a formal level or because of international incentives[6].

The EU and its institutional system have produced substantial alterations to the interest representation scene. The European public space has provided new forms of participation and power. The development of Europeanization involves civil society's participation in European governance, but it does not offer solutions for the European democratic deficit and remains a fragile point of the EU today[7].

No matter how diverse or compact the interest groups are, they rely on political and administrative backgrounds. This also applies to Western Balkan groups that have to manage the social infrastructure, the lack of funds and unstable political scene.

The European Commission has published in 2018, the "Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans". It states "joining the EU is a choice, and one that requires sharing the principles, values and goals the Union seeks to promote in its neighbourhood and beyond, including full alignment with the common foreign and security policy"[8] . The document presents a series of initiatives of significant enhancement of the EU's engagement with the countries of the Western Balkans, in mutual interest. These initiatives require support from all parts involved (strengthened

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[6] Rozbicka et al, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[7] Borońska-Hryniewiecka, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

[8] European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions: A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans. 2018, COM(2018) 65 final, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/betapolitical/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf, 21.02.2021.

support to the rule of law, reinforcing engagement on security and on migration, increasing connectivity, launching a Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans, supporting reconciliation and good neighbourly relations). In addition, this document ensures once again that the European perspective of the Western Balkans is clear and unambiguous and the conditions and criteria for EU membership are well established.

The EU underlines the role of domestic interest groups in passing forward the European message. Therefore, the decision-making process of future EU member states should guarantee the inclusion of all participants. Interest groups are stimulated "to take on a dual strategy"[9]. In short, the interest groups should search for opportunities and actors to influence, alongside their area of expertise, both at a national and EU level.

Local groups are involved in the processes of interest representation, and "EU policies can have profound consequences for domestic political opportunity structures"[10].

The Western Balkan interest groups: a process towards Europeanization?

According to Fink-Hafner[11], the variety of interest groups present in all Balkan countries is similar to those in most pluralist democracies. It includes:

- "Business, both individual businesses and their associations, as well as employers' organizations.
- Trade unions and professional associations, such as doctors and lawyers.
- Ethnic and religious groups.
- Public interest groups, including environmentalists and human rights groups; groups for senior citizens and women; and various social issue groups, from groups combating domestic violence to those fighting homelessness".

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[9] Rozbicka, et al, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

[10] Jan Beyers, Rainer Eising, and William Maloney, "Researching Interest Group Politics in Europe and Elsewhere: Much We Study, Little We Know?", in *West European Politics*, No. 6, Vol. 31, 2009, pp. 1103–1128, p. 1116.

[11] Danica Fink-Hafner, Clive S. Thomas, "The Balkan experience: Explanations of public affairs and interest group activity", in *Journal of Public Affairs*, 19: e1919, 2019, pp. 1-12, https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1919, 21.02.2021, p. 7.

The same author mentions that the international influence is part of a series of influences that shaped the Balkan interest groups[12]. It has major repercussions that moulded the group systems of the Western Balkans and developed the process of Europeanization and internationalization.

Inspired by contemporary authors, Radaelli proposes four difficult outcomes of the process of Europeanization, applicable to the interest groups, trying to cover the magnitude of change and future direction: retrenchment (becoming less European), inertia (lack of change), absorption (change as adaptation) and transformation (paradigmatic change)[13]. The proposal requires further research.

Sharing the opinion of Borońska-Hryniewiecka, Europeanization can take different forms depending on the impact upon the public sphere and the relations between the EU administration and interest groups. Still, the Western Balkans Europeanization phenomenon cannot answer questions like how much change has brought, being considered: a process (of diffusion, learning, adjusting, and the reorientation of politics); effect (of engagement with Europe); cause (of further integration); and relation (between the EU and other actors)[14].

The non-state actors take the role of agents of Europeanization[15]. Analysts can claim that there are also opened options of behaviour for interest groups like:

- domestic groups pursuing a 'dual strategy' and promote their interests vis-à-vis both domestic and EU institutions,
- Europeanized domestic groups with lobbying strategies and logic of behaviour largely EU-dependent[16],

And a third option, mostly forgotten by my colleagues,

- Eurosceptic domestic groups, with sole intentions to maintain everything "as it is" or becoming "less European", as Radaelli mentions above.

Beyers found a solution for the Western Balkans interest groups. He mentions "disparities in resources lead to disparities in the

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 4.

[13] Radaelli, *op. cit*., p. 37.

[14] Borońska-Hryniewiecka, *op. cit*., pp. 75-76.

[15] *Ibidem*, p. 82.

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 84.

Europeanization of interest groups"[17]. As a solution, the European Union may provide additional resources and abilities to those peripheral and weakly organised interest groups at the domestic level. EU programmes and projects have contributed to the development of interest group systems. Interest groups get money from EU funds during the pre-accession stage, but more funds will become available once their home states join EU[18].

The disadvantage of using those wonderful *additional resources* is the transformation of a long-term, complex process like Europeanization into a bait for Western Balkans interest groups. We can go further and sustain that the Europeanization process creates a dependency on EU funding, but not a healthy relationship with supranational and national decision-makers based on transparency. The advantages are that internal interest groups pursue their position at local/national/European level because this enables them to provide crucial information to domestic public officials[19]. The EU institutions and other national representatives at the EU level benefit from the information provided from domestic level actors.

Conclusions

The entire topic area needs far more empirical research. We should remember that the Western Balkan countries requires a culture of civil society, with codes of ethics, regulations, European values, methods and strategies, available to the public. This situation affects the contribution of interest groups as Europeanization agents or simple messengers of the European Union.

The process of networking among interest groups from local to European level is important. The connection becomes a useful cover for the lack of expertise and experience about EU policy-making. For the Western Balkan countries, the European Union identifies the main threats regarding interest groups like lack of transparency, political, financial and administrative instability, as well as a continuous battle over resources.

In any case, regardless of personal opinions, we can share a common conclusion that "Europe matters" today in most countries in

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[17] Jan Beyers, Bart Kerremans, "Critical resource dependencies and the Europeanization of domestic interest groups", in *Journal of European Public Policy*, Issue 3, Vol., 2007, pp. 460 – 481, DOI: 10.1080/13501760701243822, p. 462.

[18] See Rozbicka, et al., *op. cit.*

[19] See Beyers, Kerremans, *op. cit.*

Western Balkans[20]. The lack of civil society culture does not make justice to the whole process of Europeanization. Europe matters and national decision-makers need available models in order to evolve. The same applies to the interest groups.

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[20] Erica Panighello, "Between localisation and Europeanisation. Non-governmental organisations in Bosnia and Herzegovina" in David Armstrong, Valeria Bello, Julie Gilson and Debora Spini (eds.), *Civil Society and International Governance. The role of non-state actors in global and regional regulatory frameworks*, London: Routledge, 2010, p. 103.

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EUROPEANIZATION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS – CHALLENGES AND TRENDS

Michelle Abergel

Europeanization of the Balkans

In order to discuss the concept of Europeanization of the Balkans, it is first important to define and clarify the concept of Europeanization itself. The most common definition is that of Radaelli[1]:

> "Process of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things', and shared
> beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and substantial) discourse, political structures and public choices".

The concept of Europeanization refers to the process of change throughout Europe, which has occurred following the ongoing growth and expend of the European Union. Over the past decade, the EU has influenced substantial changes in terms of domestic policies of countries which have become, or wanted to become a part, of the union. As a result, the EU has become one of the most influential institutes in Europe over the past years, and it is enough for a country to be considered as a candidate to join it, that domestic changes will begin to play out in its policies[2]. However, this begs the question: why does the EU has so much power in determining domestic policy across Europe? In their article, Moumoutzis and Zartaloudis[3] address this very question. The authors have found four

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[1] Claudio, M. Radaelli, "Europeanization: Solution or problem?", in Michelle Cini & Angela Bourne (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in European Union Studies*, Palgrave, Basingstole, 2006, p. 30.

[2] Gozde Yilmaz, "From Europeanization to de-Europeanization: The Europeanization process of Turkey in 1999-2014", *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 24, 1, 2016, pp. 86-100.

[3] Kyriakos Moumoutzis & Sotirios Zartaloudis, "Europeanization mechanisms and process tracing: A template for empirical research", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 54, 2, 2016, pp. 337-352.

possible explanations for the Europeanization process: instrumental learning; social learning; naming and shaming; and peer pressure. The first explanation, instrumental learning, refers to the process in which policy makers learn new information from other EU member states, assess it and, if it fits their designated goals, incorporate that information in their policy. The second explanation, social learning, refers to the same learning process, but the end-result is a bit different, where the information gathered is used not only in the policy itself, but in the goal of the policy. Meaning, the information which is acquired is used to change the policy. The third explanation, naming and shaming, refers to the process of evaluations of national performance, which can use to embarrass national governments. The fourth and final explanation, peer pressure, refers to occasions where national policy-makers use pressure to persuade countries to adopt behaviors which are acceptable by the EU.

Despite these evident and explicit disadvantages to the process of Europeanization, most European countries still desire to be a part of the European Union and take advantages of the many attributes it has. One prominent example is the area of the western Balkans, which for many years has been described as a part of Europe, but on the outside of Europe. The main reason for this description is because the area is physically in Europe, but it has not taken part of the European community, or the European Union. Not only that, but during the communist area, the area was deeply immersed in communism, which meant that the countries in the area never experienced western democracy. After the communism collapsed and the falling apart of Yugoslavia, the western Balkans was made out of new states, which wanted to join the EU and be a proper part of Europe, so that they will not only be in Europe, but be a part of Europe, for the first time[4].

However, this process is not an easy one, especially when considering the fact that some of the countries which are a part of the western Balkans are still not entirely free and still suffer from governmental problems, as a result of the newly established democracies in countries such as Albania, Macedonia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo. These problems include, among other things, ethnic tensions, unstable borders and secessionist movements. Even in states which have more

[4] Marko Babic, "Understanding the complexity: Europeanization in the western Balkans", *Horyzonty Plityki*, 5, 10, 2014, pp. 85-104.

governmental stability, such as Croatia and Serbia, some of these problems still exists. Given the fact the one of the main criteria in becoming a part of the EU is the protection of human rights, it is not surprising that the western Balkans are still on the outside, looking in.[5] The most interesting thing in the history if the western Balkans, is the fact that although the region tries and hopes in the past years to join the EU and undergo Europeanization, throughout the 20th century, the area was defined by the process which was named "Balkanization". This name is used to describe the period in which the governments in the Balkans were communist, imperial, and totalitarian. All through this time, the countries which were part of the Balkans were characterized by ethnic conflict and ethnic separation. These conflicts were violent and resulted in fragmentation into separate entities, which were defined and individualistic in nature. This, as opposed to the basic concept of the EU, which refers to integration and acceptance of different nationalities and ethnicities.[6]

Another aspect, or criteria, in order to become a member state of the EU, is to comply with the Copenhagen Criteria, which describes and specifies the conditions for membership in the EU. However, countries must comply with this criteria before they become part of the union, which better exemplifies the way which the union impacts the different countries in Europe, even before they become part of the union. However, when dealing or addressing the western Balkans, the process if integration into the EU is a complex one, more so then in other countries throughout Europe, mainly because this region is made out of countries and states which are barely eligible to be termed states, let alone qualify to meet the strict standards of the European union. The main reason for this, is the fact that after the falling apart of the former Yugoslavia, the newly founded countries were more busy establishing themselves then providing their citizens with things like security and social welfare[7]. Thus far we have focused on the difficulties which the western Balkans face in the process of

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[5] Tanja A. Borzel, *When Europeanization hits limited statehood: The western Balkans as a test case for the transformative power of Europe*, KFG Working Paper Series, No. 30, 2011, Kolleg-Forschergruppe (KFG) "The Transformative Power of Europe", Freie Universität Berlin.

[6] Esref Yalinklicli, "From neo-Balkanization to Europeanization: Institutional change and regional cooperation in the western Balkans", *Balkan Arastirma Enstitusu Dergisi*, 3, 2, 2014, pp. 127-149.

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becoming a part of the EU. Now, I would like to focus on some of the changes which have occurred in the region since its separation into different, separate and independent states in terms of demography and the issue of human rights.

Demographic changes in the Balkans

The western Balkans have undergone some significant changes in demography over the past decades, as did the general demography of Europe. For example, a noticeable change in population for the entire continent can be noted for the early 1990s', where there was a distinct deficit of births and deaths, which led to a halt in the population change. However, since that time, there was a rapid increase in population that has continued steadily ever since. After the falling out of the communist regime in western Balkans, the demographics in the area began to change, due to large waves of labor migration from the area to western Europe, which was able to take place due to the opening of state boundaries. This type of large migration wasn't possible previously, when the western Balkans was made out of communist states, which held closed boundaries and strict immigration laws, which made it difficult for citizens to move[8].

When looking at the demographic in the Balkans in terms of population growth, it is obvious that the area as a whole is in serious problems. According to information regarding the growth rate of the Balkan states, we can see that the general growth rate is rather slow for the whole region, especially in Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Serbia. These countries have negative growth levels for their population. Other countries in the area have very low growth levels too, which could be dangerous when it comes to future statistics, since the population will continue to age and unless changewill occur in the near future, the next decade will meet an old population in the Balkans, which can cause, among other things, social security problems[9].

In addition to the aging of the Balkan population, evidence show that the general population in the European Union is also suffering from a demographic crisis. This crisis is cause due to a severe decline in birth rates

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[8] Alexandre Avdeev, Tatiana Eremenko, Patrick Festy, Joelle Gaymu, Nathalie Le Bouteillec & Sabine Springer, "Population and Demographic Trends of European Countries, 1980-2010", *Population*, 66, 1, 2011, pp. 9-130.

[9] Fatih Celebioglu, "Investigation of development indicators in the Balkan countries for the post-socialist period", *Journal of Economic and Social Studies*, 1, 1, 2011, pp. 111-122.

over the past few years, which means that the European population is slowly shrinking. To this we must add the second demographic crisis of the 21st century in Europe, which is the migration crisis which took place as of 2015, when more than a million immigrants crossed the European borders, mainly through the Balkan states, to seek refuge in Europe. Many of these immigrants traveled to other EU countries, but a significant amount stayed in the Balkan, and along with the declining birth rates, are slowly changing the demographic landscape of the western Balkans and of the European Union as a whole[10].

Following the dissolution of the western Balkans in to separate, independent countries, there was a formation of a new landscape, characterized by multi-ethnicity. However, at the same time, this multi-ethnicity has also resulted in a severe rise in nationalism, which wasn't as strong before the breakdown of the communist countries in western Balkans. A possible explanation for this new nationalism could be the violent history which has led to the breakdown. The violence mostly took part between different ethnicities and different nationalities, which can explain why afterwards, people cultivated hatred towards nationalities other than their own. However, this history cannot be the only reason for this rise in nationalism. Another reason could be a neighboring effect, which can cause nationalism in neighboring countries, simply due to the proximity of the events[11].

Despite this information, most of the western Balkans in the decades following the fall of the former Yugoslavia republic, did not necessarily suffer such displays of nationalism. Most of the citizens in the new formed countries were busy with building a new life within a new set of rules, and only in specific parts of the region, did such displays of obvious and overt acts of nationalism occurred. One of the most distinct areas in which there was a noticeable rise in nationalism and self-identification was in Montenegro, where the population was divided

10 Paul Demeny, "Europe's two demographic crises: The visible and the unrecognized", *Population and Development Review*, 42, 1, 2016, pp. 111-120.

11 Karin Dyrstad, "After ethnic civil war: Ethno-nationalism in the western Balkans", *Journal of Peace Research*, 49, 6, 2012, pp. 817-831.

mostly between the Montenegrins and the Serbs. Other parts of the population included Bosnjaks, Albanians, Muslims, Croats, and Roma[12].

Despite changes in nationality and origin, the majority of the Balkan states were founded and formed as Christian countries, with Christian identity. As such, the Muslim minority which resides in these countries often finds itself excluded and even discriminated against by the general population. This occurred mainly due to the demographic changes which happened in the Balkans during the 20th century and the many changes, it brought to the area. The demographic changes have led to the uprising of nationality, which was based on linguistic and religious identity, which meant that those who did not share the same language or religion was not considered part of the general national identity. This meant that the Muslim population in the Balkan suffered and still suffers from discrimination and a sense of being "left out"[13].

Another important issue that needs consideration in the aftermath of the fall of the communist bloc in western Balkans, is the fact that after the new countries in the area have declared independence, and the area has relatively calmed down from the previous wars it underwent, many refugees who left their homes during the troubled years have started to return home, causing a new issue for the new countries to deal with. In addition to trying to build strong and stable nations in a war-ridden area, the new governments need to find a way to incorporate these refugees into the population and find them a safe place to live. In order to do so, these new countries need to find a way to reconcile the previous differences with their neighboring countries, in order to incorporate the refugees in the society, while maintaining stability, which is still a fragile concept in some of the countries in the western Balkans[14].

Thus far we have examined the way in which the population has been changed after the fall of the communist bloc and the formation of the new states in the western Balkans. Now, I would loke to examine the subject of human rights in the area, since it is one of the most important requirements of the EU, from candidate states hoping to join the union,

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12 Sofiya Zahova, "'Roma' labeling, identity politics and EU-integration: The case of Montenegro", *Slovensky narodopis*, 66, 4, 2018, pp. 419-435.

13 Strashko Stojanovski & Dejan Marolov, "The Balkan Muslim discourse: Identity among the Muslims of Slavic origin", *New Balkan Politics*, 17, 2015.

14 Ioana-Bianca Berna, "State-building and Europeanization in the Western Balkans", *Economics, Management, and Financial Markets*, 8, 4, 2013, pp. 154-159.

especially given the fact that the area is filled with newly returning refugees, who are trying to acclimate to the new surroundings, and find a place where they can feel safe and at home.

Human rights in the Balkans

In Montenegro, which is one of the smallest countries in the Western Balkans, one of the most important and protected population is the population referred to as "Roma", or "Gypsy". This population, which is made out of previous Romanian citizens, is of particular stature in the eyes of the EU to such an extent, that it has received its own specification in the criteria for the handling of human rights in the western Balkans[15].

Of course, there can be no discussion about human rights in the western Balkans without addressing the huge 2015-2016 refugee crisis, which took place mostly in and around the western Balkans. During that period, eyes around the world were directed towards the millions of refugees which arrived from countries which suffered from internal conflict, in hopes of finding a warm and excepting home in the European Union. In order to get there, many of the refugees had to go through the Balkan states, which caused a major public debate as to the question of whether to let the refugees pass through the borders, or to be left within the boundaries of the Balkan states. It is important to note again, that many of the Balkan states are being considered to join the EU, which emphasizes human rights and the handling of these rights with the utmost respect and caution, as a major priority. That is one of the main reasons that the Balkan states found themselves dealing with a record number of refugees, seeking help and assistance, in a time when the Balkan states themselves where hardly stable[16].

As part of the efforts made in order to handle the refugee crisis, as well as maintain stability in the entire Balkan area during the time it was stabling itself, one of the key elements which was used to keep the peace and guard the standards of human rights, as they were established by the EU, was the police force. The purpose of using the police force as a mean to

[15] Sofiya Zahova, "'Roma' labeling, identity politics and EU-integration: The case of Montenegro", *Slovensky narodopis*, 66, 4, 2018, pp. 419-435.

[16] Milena Santric-Milicevic, Milena Vasic, Vladimir Vasic, Mirjana Zivkovic-Sulovic, Dragana Cirovic, Milan Lackovic & Nikolina Boskovic, "Uptake of health care services by refugees: Modeling a country response to a western Balkan refugee crisis", *Healthcare*, 8, 2020, pp. 560-574.

maintain the peace and protecting human rights, was twofold. First, the police are the main authority responsible for maintaining civil stability and security in every state around the world, and the Balkan is no exception. However, since the police was involved in acts of war, ethnic bias and human rights violations during the disintegration of Yugoslavia, it was crucial to rebuild the public trust in the police force, using international reform. Second, by establishing the police as an organization responsible for keeping the welfare of the citizens, it was intended to become an organization which works for the citizens and serves the citizens, not the state. That way, it will have a better chance in improving the domestic human rights practices in the Balkan states[17].

It is important to note, as was stated before, that many, if not all the steps that were taken in the Balkan states directed at protecting human rights, were done so under the supervision and instruction of the EU, and as part of the process of accepting the Balkan states into the union. Since the 1990s', the EU has been involved in the western Balkans as far as human rights were concerned. During that time, we can observe three distinct approaches used by the EU: containment, intervention, and integration. The first approach- containment, was relevant in the first half of the 1990s' and included efforts to contain as much as possible of the conflict-related human rights problems in the region, together with humanitarian assistance to the victims. The second approach, intervention, started later, during the middle of the 1990s'. When EU member states began to actively support efforts to unite parts of the Balkan which were turn apart by war. These active efforts marked the first steps which were taken to intervene in the acts which were happening in the Balkans as far as human rights. The third approach, integration, started to take place in the middle of the 2000s', when the relationship between the EU and the Balkan states changed. At this point, the focus became more about protecting and maintaining human rights than ever before, while integrating the EU values into the policing in the region[18].

[17] Gemma Collantes-Celador & Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, "Introduction to special section on 'police reform and human rights in the western Balkans'", *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 23, 4, 2019, pp. 447-453.

[18] Tobias Flessenkemper, "European Union approaches to police and human rights in the Western Balkans", *The International Journal of Human Rights,* 23, 4, 2019, pp. 454-475.

Conclusion

The main goal of this paper was to examine the Europeanization process that have occurred in the Western Balkans over the past two decades, since the fall of Yugoslavia, while trying to understand the demographic changes that the area has seen over those years, and the way in which human rights issues fit in to the mix.

The first thing that stands out when examining all of these issues is the fact that over the years, and even now when any of the countries in the western Balkans are being considered for the European union, the entire area has been perceived as being physically in Europe, but not quite a part of Europe. The main reason is the fact that even though the communist bloc has fallen, its influences are still quite evident in many of the countries in the western Balkans. These influences can be found in the culture, architecture, politics, and many other fields which are part of the day-to-day life.

Despite this perspective regarding the Western Balkans, the European Union still has started considering countries from the area to join the Union, going back to 1999. However, in order for the Balkan states to be able to join the union, they must meet certain criteria, part of which are to demonstrate stability in the specific country in question, and another is to meet certain human rights standards, which state that human rights in the country must be kept at the utmost respect. Because of that, the EU has put in a lot of efforts throughout the years in order to reach stability and improve policing and human rights standards in the western Balkans, in order for them to meet the criteria and be able to join the union and be a "real" part of Europe.

Furthermore, I believe that the process is responsible, among other things, to the way that the Balkan states view and perceive refugees, especially given the huge refugee crisis of 2015-2016, which forces the Balkan states to deal with a massive number of refugees and asylum-seekers, looking for a chance at a better life, just like the citizens of the Balkans hoped to achieve after the wars in the area.

Finally, I believe that the Europeanization process in the Balkans is a positive step for the region, which will allow the Balkan states to reinforce their stability and build the states in the region, while being under the protection of a large and powerful organization, which puts human rights issues at the top of the list in terms of priority, meaning that the

citizens and the refugees seeking help in the Balkans will be able to rely on the governments and on the EU to protect them and their rights.

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SERBIE, LES ELECTIONS GENERALES DU 21 JUIN 2020, UN PLEBISCITE POUR ALEKSANDAR VUCIC ?

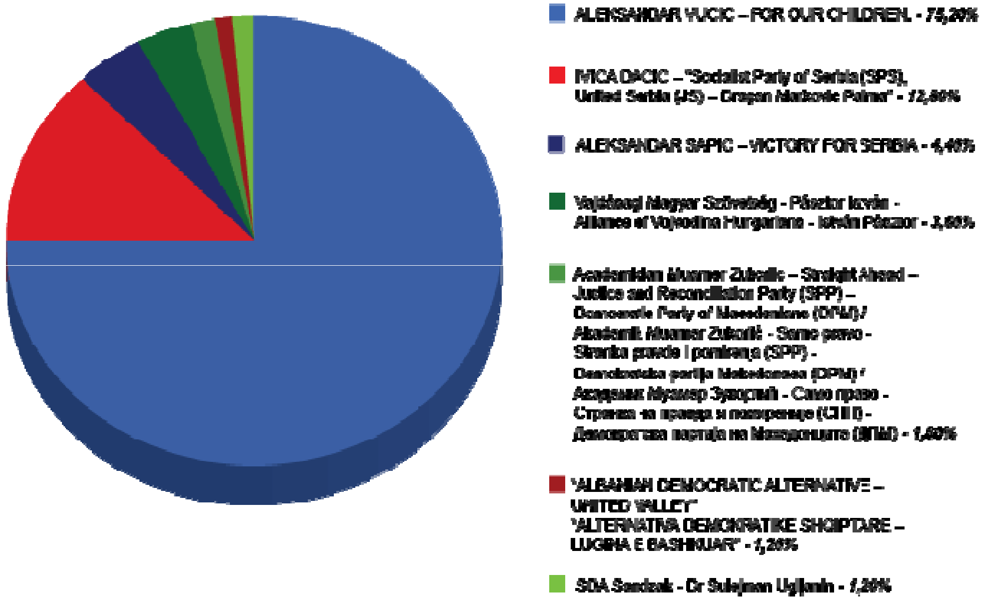
Pauline Soulier

Le 26 avril 2020 devaient se tenir les élections générales en Serbie. Toutefois, cet État, comme l'ensemble de la péninsule balkanique est rudement touché par la covid-19. Dès le début de la crise, le gouvernement prend la décision d'un confinement très strict : l'état d'urgence est proclamé le 16 mars et le couvre-feu à 18 heures deux jours après. Une mesure supplémentaire est prise pour les personnes de plus de 65 ans[1] : interdiction totale de sortir sauf le dimanche entre 5h et 7h du matin pour faire leurs courses dans des magasins dédiés. Malgré toutes ces mesures, la pandémie progresse[2] et le gouvernement serbe n'a pas d'autre choix que de reporter les élections au 21 juin 2020.

La campagne se déroule dans un climat délétère. La mainmise d'Aleksandar Vučić sur les médias accorde à son parti une visibilité refusée aux autres. Le dépouillement des bulletins est sans appel : une large victoire pour le Président. La coalition autour de son parti, le SNS remporte 188 des 250 sièges de l'Assemblée nationale. La coalition SPS-JS en obtient 32. Pour la première fois, l'opposition n'est pas représentée à l'Assemblée nationale alors qu'elle a toujours été présente durant la période Milošević. *A contrario*, pour la première fois également les listes albanaises obtiennent 3 sièges et les Royalistes, officieusement soutenus par le gouvernement font leur retour depuis la Deuxième Guerre mondiale.

[1] Cette mesure de confinement extrêmement strict conduit à une détresse sociale et psychologique des personnes de plus de 65 ans https://www.rfi.fr/fr/europe/20200403-a-la-une-covid-19-en-serbie-la-grande-solitude-plus-65-ans-assign%C3%A9s-%C3%A0-r%C3%A9sidence.

[2] Le gouvernement serbe aurait largement falsifié le nombre réel de morts selon le site d'informations BIRN https://www.rfi.fr/fr/europe/20200623-coronavirus-serbie-nombre-contaminations-tr%C3%A8s-sous-%C3%A9valu%C3%A9.



Répartition des sièges au Parlement serbe suite aux élections générales du 21 juin 2020. Source : www.parlament.gov.rs

Ces élections sont révélatrices de la pratique du pouvoir par A. Vučić et de la situation politique en Serbie. En effet, elles se tiennent malgré l'appel au boycott de l'opposition traduisant l'état de la démocratie en Serbie et donne à s'interroger sur la nature du régime (I). La campagne offre également l'occasion de voir la maîtrise d'A. Vučić en matière de communication. Il est un Président 2.0 donnant une nouvelle dimension au populisme d'État (II).

I. A. Vučić inébranlable face aux appels au boycott

L'opposition n'attend pas la crise sanitaire pour appeler au boycott des élections générales. Elle lance cet appel dès septembre 2019. Elle dénonce l'illusion démocratique créée par des élections relevant davantage du cérémonial démocratique que du véritable processus politique. Selon l'opposition, les élections sont jouées d'avance et assureront la victoire d'A. Vučić. Pour sa part, lors d'une interview accordée au *Courrier des Balkans*, le sociologue Jovo Bakić[3] qualifie le régime serbe de « mafieux et autoritaire ».

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[3] « La démocratie, les oligarques et l'extrême droite », 14 avril 2020, *Courrier des Balkans*, https://www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Serbie-la-democratie-les-oligarques-et-l-extreme-droite [consulté le 27 février 2021, NB, tous les articles de presse en ligne ont été consultés à cette date.]

La fin de la démocratie imparfaite serbe

Il est vrai que depuis la prise de pouvoir d'A. Vučić, l'état de la démocratie serbe s'est dégradé. Depuis sa création en 2006, l'indice de démocratie de *The Economist Group*[4] classe la Serbie dans la catégorie des « démocraties imparfaites ». Elle obtient systématiquement une note comprise entre 6 et 7[5]. En 2020, sa note est de 6.22, la plus mauvaise en 14 ans. Les démocraties imparfaites sont des régimes dans lesquels les libertés civiles fondamentales sont respectées et qui assurent des élections libres et équitables. Toutefois, ces États ne garantissent pas d'autres aspects de la démocratie en portant notamment atteinte à la liberté de la presse ou ne favorisant pas une forte participation à la vie politique. Cette classification ne semble pas en adéquation avec la réalité de la vie politique serbe au regard des élections générales du printemps 2020.

En effet, comme le prévoit la définition, la liberté de la presse et la faible participation à la vie politique sont bien présentes en Serbie. Ce sont d'ailleurs deux des arguments de l'opposition pour boycotter les élections. A. Vučić a la main mise sur la presse et limite leur accès à l'opposition. La participation à la vie politique est elle aussi assez restreinte aujourd'hui en Serbie. L'exemple des militants pour les droits pour les minorités sexuelles le prouve. Depuis 2002, l'Assemblée de Serbie-Monténégro puis de Serbie adoptent un ensemble de lois visant à la fois à dépénaliser les relations entre individus de même sexe et à les protéger. Par exemple, en 2002, une loi sur l'audiovisuel interdit la diffusion de contenu à portée discriminatoire envers les homosexuels. En 2009, une loi interdit les discriminations en raison du sexe et des identités de genre dans tous les domaines de la société. Depuis 2012, les opérations de réattribution sexuelle sont intégralement remboursées par l'Assurance maladie. Si les homosexuels se voient reconnaitre des droits à titre individuel, il en va différemment pour les couples. Néanmoins, malgré tout cet arsenal juridique, les minorités LGBTQI ne sont pas réellement intégrées dans la société. A l'heure actuelle, il n'existe en Serbie aucune union légale pour les couples de même sexe ni de possibilité de fonder une famille. *Amnesty*

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[4] https://www.eiu.com/n/ .

[55] La note moyenne de chaque État est calculée selon 60 critères répartis en cinq catégories. Les États obtenant une note entre 6 et 8 sont qualifiés de « démocraties imparfaites ».

international[6] épingle la Serbie en 2014 pour son manque d'action dans la lutte contre l'homophobie et la transphobie. En effet, entre 2011 et 2013, aucune Marche des fiertés ne peut avoir lieu en Serbie suite à une attaque orchestrée par des ultranationalistes en 2010[7] ayant fait cent cinquante blessés.

La nomination d'Ana Brnabić comme Ministre de l'administration publique en août 2016, puis Premier Ministre en 2017 ne change pas la donne. Lesbienne et participant à la Marche des fiertés de 2017, elle est davantage perçue comme une caution progressiste pour le régime d'A. Vučić[8]. Depuis son arrivée au pouvoir, la situation des personnes LGBTQI ne s'est pas améliorée en Serbie. La forte influence de l'Église orthodoxe sur la politique et la société civile serbes est l'un des facteurs de ce manque de reconnaissance des droits des LGBTQI. En 2017, alors qu'A. Brnabić est à peine promue Premier Ministre, le primat de l'Église orthodoxe compare l'homosexualité à l'inceste[9].

Ce seul exemple des minorités sexuelles montre que la Serbie ne peut pas être classée parmi les démocraties imparfaites. Elle ne répond pas au critère du respect des libertés civiles fondamentales. De même, celui des élections libres et équitables pose question. L'un des arguments au boycott par l'opposition est justement ce manque de liberté et d'équiter lors de la campagne électorale et du scrutin. Outre sa difficulté à accéder aux médias, la campagne électorale des élections générales se déroule dans le contexte particulier de la crise sanitaire, dans une période de confinement et de

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[6]https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/05/homophobia-still-tolerated-governments-around-world/

[7] Jean-Arnault Dérens, « Belgrade : le violents affrontements en marge de la Gay Pride », *RFI*, 10 octobre 2010 ; https://www.rfi.fr/fr/europe/20101010-belgrade-violents-affrontements-marge-gay-pride; « Heurts entre policiers et manifestants homophobes lors de la Gay Pride», *France 24*, 10 octobre 2010, https://www.france24.com/fr/20101010-Serbie-Belgrade-gay-pride-debute-sous-haute-surveillance-arrestation-homophobe

[8] Jean-Michel Normand, « Sexe et pouvoir. Ana Brnabic, première ministre lesbienne au risque du « pinkwashing », *Le Monde*, 20 août 2020, https://www.lemonde.fr/series-d-ete/article/2020/08/29/sexe-et-pouvoir-ana-brnabic-premiere-ministre-lesbienne-au-risque-du-pinkwashing_6050326_3451060.html; « Serbie : Ana Brnabić, l'intégrisme néolibéral emballé dans un drapeau arc-en-ciel », *Bilten*, 28 décembre 2017, https://www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Serbie-Ana-Brnabic-l-integrisme-neoliberal-emballe-dans-un-drapeau-arc-en-ciel

[9] « La Première ministre serbe, lesbienne, à la Gay pride de Belgrade », *Ouest France*, 17 septembre 2017, https://www.ouest-france.fr/europe/serbie/en-images-en-serbie-ouverture-de-la-gay-pride-avec-la-premiere-ministre-5252764

couvre-feu. Il lui est impossible de communiquer avec les électeurs. Ces obstacles sont doublés de manœuvre du pourvoir pour faire pression sur les citoyens. Ainsi, selon le Centre de recherches et d'analyses de Voïvodine[10], ils ont reçu des appels téléphoniques pour les enjoindre à voter pour le SNS, certains fonctionnaires ont reçu des ordres de vote, dans certains villages, les cartes d'identité des Rroms ont été confisquées et ils ont été conduits en autocars au bureau de vote. De nombreuses irrégularités sont également constatées le jour du scrutin. L'opposition n'a aucun droit de regard sur les listes électorales et n'est pas en mesure de vérifier leur validité, des électeurs notamment des fonctionnaires sont victimes de la méthode des « trains bulgares »[11] et des électeurs se sont vus refuser l'entrée des bureaux de vote. Bien que 234 sections soient appelées à revoter, le résultat reste le même. Le boycott de l'opposition est une opération vaine et finalement contreproductif puisqu'elle disparaît de l'Assemblée nationale.

Tous ces éléments tendent à faire de la Serbie une démocratie hydride selon la classification de *The Economist Group* c'est-à-dire un État empêchant des élections libres et équitables par l'acceptation d'irrégularités importantes et des pressions sur les partis d'opposition, nous y reviendrons. L'État de droits est en situation de faiblesse et la corruption est souvent généralisée. Cette définition correspond mieux à la situation de la Serbie en 2020. Suite à ces élections, l'opposition politique qui disparaît du Parlement, ancre un peu plus la Serbie d'A. Vučić dans l'illibéralisme[12] et l'éloigne des portes de l'Union européenne. Cette requalification concorde avec celle de *Freedom House*. Selon cet organisme la Serbie appartient à la catégorie « Transitional or Hybrid Regim »[13]. La note de la Serbie a été dégradée d'un point. Freedom House pointe notamment la faiblesse de la liberté de la presse, la corruption et la violence intentionnalisée par A. Vučić envers l'opposition.

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[10] « Serbie : un Parlement à la botte d'Aleksandar Vučić », *Courrier des Balkans*, 22 juin 2020, https://www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Serbie-un-Parlement-a-la-botte-d-Aleksandar-Vucic.

[11] Méthode de trucage d'un scrutin par le contrôle des bulletins de votes. Dans le cas des élections générales du printemps 2020, certains électeurs ont dû photographier leur bulletin de vote ou le rendre bien visible au moment de l'insérer dans l'urne.

[12] Fareed Zakaria, *De la démocratie illibérale*, Paris, Gallimard, Le Débat, 1998.

[13] https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/nations-transit/2020

Finalement, l'appel au boycott renforce le pouvoir du Président et l'absence de l'opposition à l'Assemblée lui laisse les mains toujours plus libres pour agir à sa guise dans un contexte sanitaire qui lui donne légitimité à confisquer davantage de pouvoir.

Des casseroles aux balcons, une opposition à la naphtaline

Freedom House insiste sur le climat d'insécurité dans lequel vit l'opposition. Celui-ci s'est encore détérioré entre 2019-2020 avec le mouvement de contestation en raison des élections générales. Le report de la date du scrutin dû à la crise sanitaire et les obstacles rencontrés par l'opposition pour mener une campagne efficace, ne sont pas les seuls motifs de colère.

Confinée et sous couvre-feu, l'opposition ne dispose que de très peu de moyens pour faire entendre sa voix. Ainsi, après l'annonce du report de la date du scrutin, rendez-vous est pris pour un concert de casseroles. Dès le 26 avril, date originelle des élections, à 20h 05, les habitants des grandes villes serbes frappent sur leurs instruments de cuisine pour se faire entendre du gouvernement et réclamer un État libre, démocratique et solidaire. Ce concert a lieu cinq minutes après la séance d'applaudissements quotidienne en soutien aux personnels soignants. Cet enchainement de manifestations sonores est révélateur de la situation de la Serbie qui mène à la fois un combat contre la pandémie et contre son gouvernement. Toutefois, les deux ne sont pas totalement déconnectés l'un de l'autre. Le mouvement *Ne davimo Beograd*, à l'origine de l'appel au concert de casseroles, explique que le gouvernement se sert de la pandémie comme une occasion d'augmenter sa popularité et se présenter comme un sauveur[14].

En parallèle de ces actions sonores, le 4 mai, certains soutiens à Dragan Đilas, maire de Belgrade et figure centrale de l'opposition à A. Vučić, bravent l'interdit du couvre-feu et se rassemblent dans le quartier de Vračar. La vieille, il a publié sur *Twitter* une vidéo de personnes postées devant l'immeuble où vivent ses enfants munis d'un important dispositif de sono diffusant le chant hooligan « Đilas, voleur ». Selon, le maire de Belgrade, le Président a envoyé certains de ses supporters pour l'intimider. Sa conviction se fonde sur la réponse des partisans du SNS aux concerts de casseroles : ils allument des feux de bengale sur le toit des immeubles.

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[14] Voir deuxième partie.

Ainsi, ne pouvant battre campagne de façon traditionnelle, les militants de chaque camp s'adaptent aux restrictions sanitaires. Ceci n'est pas inédit en Serbie, bien au contraire. Le concert de casseroles est un recyclage de la fin du régime de S. Milošević. Suite aux élections générales de septembre 2000, le Parti socialiste refuse de reconnaitre sa défaite et par ricochet celle de son leader. En effet, Vojislav Koštunica, candidat de l'Opposition démocratique de Serbie (DOS) obtient la majorité des voix pour les élections présidentielles fédérales au premier tour. Si la DOS s'empare de plus de 60% des municipalités et la majorité au Parlement de Voïvodine, elle obtient seulement moins de la moitié des sièges de l'Assemblée fédérale. Les électeurs demandent le respect de leurs choix et le départ de gouvernement. Ils sont nombreux à vouloir en finir avec S. Milošević. Ne voulant pas recourir à la violence urbaine, après près de 10 ans de guerre, ils cherchent d'autres moyens de s'exprimer. Le mouvement Optor !, notamment créé par Srdja Popović[15], propose des happenings pour lutter contre le pouvoir. Parmi, la multitude de manifestations non-violentes, il y a, déjà à cette époque, le concert de casseroles. Tous les soirs à 19h 30, heure du journal télévisé, les Serbes sont appelés à se mettre à leurs balcons et fenêtres et à frapper sur des casseroles. Symboliquement, le brouhaha couvre le son des actualités, diffusées par des médias à la botte du Président[16].

Contraints de rester chez eux, ils se réapproprient les stratégies gagnantes de l'histoire récente pour lutter dans le présent. Toutefois, le résultat est bien plus contrasté aujourd'hui. Les concerts de casseroles n'ont pas empêché la tenue des élections générales et l'opposition ne retire aucun bénéfice de son boycott. Le pouvoir d'A. Vučić est plus stable que celui de S. Milošević après quatorze ans de pouvoir. *A contrario* de ce dernier, le Président actuel sait s'approprier les nouvelles technologies pour servir sa cause.

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[15] Fort du succès de Optor !, Srdja Popović prend la direction du Centre for applied non violent action and strategies, et enseigne aujourd'hui dans les plus grandes universités américaines. En 2017 parait la version française de poche de son ouvrage *Comment faire tomber un dictateur quand on est seul, tout petit, et sans armes*.

[16] Depuis sa nomination en 1998, le nouveau ministre de la communication, A. Vučić est en guerre contre les médias anti-gouvernements. Rapidement, il interdit les chaines de télévisions étrangères opposées au gouvernement et « certains médias publics [sont] au service de quelques puissances mondiales dans la conduite d'une guerre spéciale contre la Serbie » (https://english.istinomer.rs/biographies/aleksandar-vucic/).

II. A. Vučić, un président 2.0

Nous l'avons signalé, A. Vučić était le ministre de l'information à partir de 1998. Il était alors membre d'un gouvernement d'union nationale composé du Parti socialiste de S. Milošević, du Parti radical serbe (SRS) de Vojislav Šešelj et de la Gauche yougoslave de Mirjana Marković, la femme de S. Milošević. Dans le cadre de ses fonctions, il limite encore davantage la liberté d'expression et la liberté de la presse. Bien qu'il soit chassé du pouvoir lors de la « révolution des bulldozers » de 2000, il n'est jamais resté très éloigné des hautes sphères politiques, il co-dirige le SRS avec Tomislav Nikolić et obtient un mandat de député dès 2003. En 2008, il rejoint le tout nouveau SNS, fondé par T. Nikolić après son exclusion du SRS par V. Šešelj. A. Vučić devient finalement président de la Serbie en 2017.

Il est parvenu à outrepasser son passé dans le gouvernement de S. Milošević et à s'imposer auprès des Serbes. Il fait de même auprès de la communauté internationale, notamment en se présentant comme un acteur actif dans le dialogue en vue de normaliser les relations avec le Kosovo[17]. Néanmoins, nous l'avons vu précédemment, cet apaisement et cette ouverture sont une façade qui dissimule un Président menant son État d'une main de fer. Cet exercice du pouvoir repose en partie sur la mise en place d'un culte de sa personnalité[18] et par une brillante maitrise des outils de communication.

Un président sur *Twitter*, une opposition dans la rue

Le mandat de Donald Trump a fait des réseaux sociaux un outil de communication politique incontournable. La diffusion de *fake news* par le Président américain notamment sur l'épidémie de Covid-19 et les résultats des élections présidentielles de 2020 conduit les réseaux sociaux à revoir leur politique d'utilisation y compris pour les hommes politiques. Désormais, à l'instar de D. Trump, leurs comptes peuvent être suspendus voire fermés.

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[17] Voir par exemple, https://www.tvnumeriuno.it/the-gold-lion-of-saint-mark-for-peace-will-be-awarded-to-aleksandar-vucic-president-of-serbia/. Le rôle supposé fondamental d'A. Vučić dans la normalisation des relations avec le Kosovo a encore été souligné en février 2021 par Emmanuel Macron lors de la visite du Président serbe à Paris. https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2021/02/01/declaration-du-president-emmanuel-macron-avec-le-president-de-la-republique-de-serbie-aleksandar-vucic.

[18] Jean-Arnault Dérens, « *Le choc des mémoires au mépris de l'histoire* », *Le Monde diplomatique*, 1er décembre 2016, https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2016/12/DERENS/56917.

A. Vučić est lui aussi un utilisateur de *Twitter*. En avril 2020, l'université de Stanford publie un rapport sur l'utilisation de ce réseau social par le SNS ces quatre dernières années. Les chiffres sont impressionnants : 43 millions de tweets à la gloire d A. Vučić ou pour dénigrer l'opposition ; 8,5 millions de tweets proposant des liens vers le site du SNS ou des médias pro-Vučić et 34 000 tweets négatifs à l'encontre de D. Đilas. Il est clair que le SNS et ses partisans mènent une communication agressive sur *Twitter*. Elle se partage en propagande pour le gouvernement et attaque contre l'opposition avec comme cible privilégiée le maire de Belgrade. Le Stanford internet observatory attire l'attention sur la publication de nombreux messages en anglais. L'indice de compétence en anglais de EF classe la Serbie dans la catégorie « bonne maîtrise » et 13ème sur 34 États européens[19]. Malgré cette compétence solide, le serbe demeure la langue de communication première en Serbie. Ces tweets en anglais sont-ils à destination de la diaspora ?

Le rapport souligne un autre chiffre important : la fermeture de pas moins de 8 500 comptes bots pro-SNS. Ces comptes avaient pour mission de troller les comptes de l'opposition. Il est, toutefois, impossible d'établir un lien direct avec A. Vučić et/ou le SNS mais ces derniers ne prennent pas de mesures pour mettre un terme à cette pratique. Ces comptes bots sont un moyen efficace et gratuit de polluer les messages de l'opposition en les noyant dans des commentaires négatifs et pro-gouvernements. Les réseaux sociaux, comme les médias, sont sous la domination, même indirecte, du SNS et du Président.

Cette stratégie tend à montrer la modernité du Président serbe, la preuve qu'il est capable de s'adapter aux nouvelles technologues et brise ainsi, l'image de retard de la région. Sa communication digitale et massive marque également une différence entre lui et son opposition. En effet, comme nous l'avons vu précédemment, le concert de casseroles est un recyclage des stratégies de révoltes contre S. Milošević. Il s'agit, certes, d'un instrument à fort impact et original mais qui demeure ancré dans le passé. La capacité du SNS et d'A. Vučić à investir les réseaux sociaux montre leur évolution et leur innovation. Ils vivent avec leur temps alors que l'opposition reste dans la tradition, dans le passé. Combinée à l'échec du

[19] https://www.ef.fr/epi/regions/europe/serbia/. Une « bonne maîtrise » signifie la capacité pour un individu moyen de réaliser une présentation de travail en anglais, de lire un journal et de comprendre une émission de télévision. À titre de comparaison la France est 23ème au niveau européen.

boycott des élections générales, ceci marginalise toujours davantage l'opposition qui n'a plus guère que la rue comme théâtre d'expression réellement audible… théâtre qui peut lui être interdit pour raison de crise sanitaire. Cette emprise sur les réseaux sociaux renforce à la fois le pouvoir d'A. Vučić et fige la Serbie dans l'illibéralisme. Les libertés d'expression individuelles et collectives sont très limitées par le pouvoir.

Cette omniprésence du pouvoir est-elle efficace ? D'après les données de la Banque mondiale, en 2019, 77% des Serbes possèdent une connexion interne. L'impact de la communication numérique est indéniable. Néanmoins, l'efficacité d'une telle présence sur *Twitter* n'est pas prouvée. Selon les projections du site *Stastita*[20], il y aurait 520 000 comptes *Twitter* en Serbie [21], ce qui signifie que seul environ 10% de la population en possède un. Cette statistique ne rend pas compte ni du nombre de bots ni celui de comptes réellement actifs. Ainsi la présence active et agressive des soutiens d'A. Vučić et du SNS relève davantage de la lutte contre l'opposition que de la véritable communication politique.

Un populisme numérique

Si la présence sur les réseaux sociaux des hommes et partis politiques est devenue chose commune aujourd'hui, A. Vučić a passé une étape supplémentaire durant la campagne pour les élections générales du printemps 2020.

Ne pouvant rompre le confinement et couvre-feu et dans le respect des gestes de barrières, l'ensemble des candidats est privé de meetings. A. Vučić s'adapte et décide de tenir meeting par *Zoom*. La prouesse technologique est remarquable. Un des plus puissants entrepreneurs serbes a été mis à contribution pour créer le décor magistral de cet évènement. Selon un article du journal *Mašina* traduit par *Courrier des Balkans*, l'entrepreneur a été contraint de suspendre ses recherches sur un remède contre la Covid-19 et le financement de ce projet est très obscur. Quoiqu'il en soit, les désirs du Président ont été exhaussés et il a pu tenir son meeting virtuel au centre d'un cube dont les cotés latéraux sont recouverts d'écrans. Les spectateurs sont triés sur le volet. Le son des applaudissements amplifié.

[20] https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1145607/twitter-users-in-serbia.

[21] L'utilisation de VPN offre la possibilité de modifier son lieu de connexion sans bouger de chez soi.



Aleksandar Vučić en meeting sur *Zoom*
© Aleksandar Čupić / Youtube

En pratique, un meeting numérique présente de nombreux avantages. Cette technique permet de dépasser l'obstacle du nombre de participants et offre la possibilité d'être présent peu important son lieu de résidence. Le Président serbe atteint tous les coins de la Serbie sans avoir à se déplacer. Le filtrage des spectateurs est plus efficace et les risques d'infiltration par l'opposition sont réduits au maximum par la possibilité de couper les connexions.

Cette mise en scène raconte énormément de choses sur la pratique du pouvoir selon A. Vučić. D'abord, très peu d'élus sont conviés au meeting, ce qui est une différence notable avec ceux qui se déroulent en présentiel. Cette éviction des élus permet à A. Vučić de créer un lien direct avec ses électeurs. Placer au centre du dispositif, il renforce son image d'homme incontournable de la politique serbe. Tout tourne autour de lui, rien ne lui échappe. Il donne à voir une union entre lui et son peuple. Il s'offre l'image d'un homme politique extrêmement populaire.

Ensuite, ce meeting contribue au culte de sa personnalité. Il s'invite réellement chez les Serbes qui affichent ainsi son visage dans leur foyer.

Ceci donne un sentiment d'une version moderne des photographies de Tito dans les salons à l'époque yougoslave. Par ricochet, les meetings virtuels ouvrent la porte de la sphère personnelle au politique. Désormais, être militant devient un acte facile qui ne nécessite pas de sortir de chez soi. Cliquer sur un lien de connexion internet devient un acte politique. Là aussi, la méthode n'est pas sans évoquer une version moderne des discours fleuves de Fidel Castro diffusés à la télévision ou à la radio. Par cette nouvelle technologie, A. Vučić rend encore plus accessibles ses discours politiques quand pour s'opposer à lui il faut sortir dans la rue, prendre le risque d'être pris dans des débordements, prendre des risques sanitaires dans le contexte actuel. Les meetings *Zoom* sont totalement en adéquation avec l'air du temps.

D'un point de vue politique, ces meetings confortent la qualification de populisme pour définir le régime serbe en 2020. Pierre-André Taguieff[22] écrit que le populisme se traduit par des appels directs au peuple, par le rejet de la médiation, la proximité et la transparence. Il se caractérise par la rhétorique du blâme et de l'éloge, par une communication directe avec les hommes ordinaires. Ici, il n'est pas question du discours politique d'A. Vučić, nous laissons de côté la question de la rhétorique, pour nous concentrer sur le symbolisme du meeting virtuel. Tous les éléments de la définition de P.-A. Taguieff sont présents. Grâce aux murs d'écrans, le Président s'adresse aux Serbes cloîtrés chez eux en raison de la pandémie. Ils n'ont plus à faire l'effort de sortir pour soutenir leur leader, celui-ci vient à eux. En étant totalement seul au centre du dispositif, il écarte tout recours à une quelconque médiation. Il n'y a aucun intermédiaire entre lui et les Serbes. Il établit un dialogue entre lui et ses électeurs. La quasi-totale absence d'élus rend le meeting encore plus intime, elle efface l'aspect politique du rendez-vous. A. Vučić n'est pas là pour faire la promotion d'élus assis au premier rang en quête de voix, il est là pour discuter directement avec les Serbes, parler de leurs problèmes, de leurs vies bouleversées par l'épidémie. Il retire l'aspect élitiste des meetings de campagne mettant uniquement en avant les candidats. En bon populiste, il se détache sans en faire état de l'élite politique pour se mettre à la hauteur des Serbes. Il n'est pas un « d'en haut ».

[22] Pierre-André Taguieff, « Le populisme et la science politique », in Jean-Pierre Rioux. (dir.), *Les populismes*, Paris, Perrin, 2007, pp. 17-59.

Courrier des Balkans titre son article rendant compte de cet événement « Le SNS de Vučić invente le cyber-populisme »[23]. Et si c'était vrai ? Et si A. Vučić était l'initiateur d'une nouvelle façon de faire de la politique, une novation dictée par la crise sanitaire ? Il est parvenu à briser une barrière entre lui et ses électeurs. Il donne ainsi une nouvelle dimension à la définition du populisme. Le discours populiste est habituellement teinté d'un retour aux sources, d'une protection des traditions et d'une anti-modernité[24]. Ici, le Président serbe renverse la tendance, son discours populiste s'appuie sur des outils modernes alors que son opposition use de moyens d'expression ancrés dans le passé. Ce « cyber-populisme » est également l'occasion de refaire nation par le sentiment d'union sacrée qui émane du meeting. Un peuple devient une nation quand il prend conscience de lui-même. En d'autres termes, un peuple devient une nation quand il se trouve des points communs qu'il n'entend pas à d'autres et qui lui donnent envie de vivre ensemble sous la direction de membres qui lui ressemblent[25]. B. Anderson[26] ajoute que le sentiment de communauté nationale se traduit par le fait d'accomplir un même geste en même temps sans se connaître. Il donne comme exemple les rituels du quotidien tels que lire le journal au 19ème siècle ou regarder le journal télévisé au 20ème siècle. Se connecter pour écouter un homme politique pourrait devenir une nouvelle forme de création du sentiment national, une nouvelle façon de tisser des liens forts et de connecter la communauté nationale. Cette stratégie est d'autant plus efficace en temps de pandémie où les citoyens sont enfermés chez eux et doivent s'abstenir de toute relation sociale.

Finalement, par l'organisation d'un tel meeting virtuel, A. Vučić tente de resserrer les Serbes autour de sa figure charismatique. Il s'offre tous les atours du chef de légitimité à la fois charismatique et légale-rationnelle selon la typologie de Max Weber[27]. En effet, se tenir ainsi au

[23] Stefan Aleksić, « Serbie : le SNS de Vučić invente le cyber-populisme », *Mašina*, 4 juin 2020, https://www.courrierdesbalkans.fr/Le-SNS-sur-Zoom-si-le-peuple-ne-vous-convient-pas-mieux-vaut-en-creer-un

[24] Voir notamment, Paolo Pombeni, « Typologie des populismes en Europe », in Jean-Pierre Rioux (dir.), 2007, *op.cit.*, pp. 85-154.

[25] Selon la définition de John-Stuart Mill dans John Stuart Mill, *Condiderations on representative governement*, South bend, Gateway Editions, 1962.

[26] Benedict Anderson, *L'imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme*, Paris, La Découvert, 2002.

[27] Max Weber, *Économie et société*, Paris, Pocket, 2003.

milieu de tous ces participants, cette impression de gigantisme amplifié par une bande sonore poussée à son maximum, laisse penser à une intervention plébiscitée. Il est le seul recours valable en ces temps de crise. L'opposition, elle, ne parvient qu'à mobiliser que quelques centaines de personnes pour une manifestation de soutien à D. Đilas. Elle n'est pas de taille à lutter contre le Président.

La victoire du SNS et de ses alliés lors des élections générales renforce la domination légale-rationnelle du Président. Seul maître d'une Assemblée nationale dans laquelle l'opposition ne siège plus, sa voix a encore plus de poids. Il a les mains libres pour exercer son pouvoir. Les manifestations de rues et les concerts de casseroles deviennent une ambiance sonore incapable de le contrer. Le sociologue J. Bakić[28] livre une analyse sur l'état de l'opposition aujourd'hui. Sa conclusion est sans appel, elle ne représente que peu de danger pour le Président serbe. Même si elle se construit autour des figures emblématiques de D. Đilas et de Boris Tadić, ces dernières ne bénéficient pas d'une crédibilité suffisante face à A. Vučić. Le premier ne se défait pas de son image d'oligarque ayant travaillé avec le gouvernement pendant des années. Les classes les plus modestes ne parviennent pas à s'identifier à lui. La voix du deuxième est inaudible depuis qu'il a quitté le Parti démocrate pour fonder son propre parti.

Conclusion

Notre titre est formulé sous forme de question. Les élections générales du 21 juin 2020 sont-elles un plébiscite pour A. Vučić ? Sont-elles même une victoire pour le Président ?

En se bornant aux résultats bruts, la réponse est simple et immédiate : oui. Le SNS et ses alliés éliminent toute opposition tant à l'Assemblée nationale qu'à la tête des municipalités. C'est un plébiscite, les Serbes lui ont accordé leur entière confiance. Ici, A. Vučić est à la tête de ce que P.-A. Taguieff nomme un populisme-régime[29] c'est-à-dire, un régime autoritaire ou semi plébiscitaire construit autour d'un chef charismatique s'adressant directement aux masses et tirant sa légitimité de son incarnation de l'âme du peuple. L'exemple de ce type de régime est le bonapartisme. A. Vučić, dans ce cas là est un Bonaparte du 21ème siècle. De

[28] « La démocratie, les oligarques et l'extrême droite », 14 avril 2020, *Courrier des Balkans*, *op. cit.*

[29] Pierre-André Taguieff., 2007, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

plus, l'appel au boycott de l'opposition est un échec. Elle s'autoexclut des sphères de pouvoir et admet la supériorité du Président par forfait.

Cependant, une lecture plus fine et attentive des résultats montre une réalité plus nuancée. Pour prendre la mesure véritable de la victoire d'A. Vučić, il faut s'intéresser au taux de participation. Des élections sont un plébiscite si une grande majorité des électeurs se déplace. Or le 21 juin 2020, ce n'est pas le cas. Le taux de participation est de 50,32%, toutefois ce chiffre est incertain en raison des pressions sur les électeurs. Certes, c'est un taux assez élevé, le taux de participation au premier tour des élections municipales de mars 2020 en France s'élève à 44, 7%, mais pas suffisant pour conclure au plébiscite. Malgré tout, ce chiffre est intéressant à étudier. S'il n'est pas suffisant pour conclure au plébiscite, il l'est assez pour conclure à un semi-échec de l'appel au boycott par l'opposition. Il est contre-productif au regard de la législation électorale : la loi ne prévoit aucun quota minimal en dessous duquel le scrutin est annulé. Un très faible taux de participation n'aurait qu'une valeur symbolique, politiquement insuffisante. D'autres doutes s'installent également sur le taux d'abstention cette fois-ci. Pourquoi environ la moitié des électeurs serbes ne s'est pas déplacée ? Pour répondre à l'appel au boycott pour une partie, mais il est certain que la peur de la contagion et la désillusion face à la politique sont des explications non négligeables. Le problème est qu'aucune étude ne s'est intéressée à ce sujet pour le moment.

Ainsi, que conclure des élections générales de juin 2020 ? Elles sont une victoire mathématique et de représentation à l'Assemblée nationale pour A. Vučić, mais pas le plébiscite annoncé par la presse. L'opposition est clairement la grande perdante de ce scrutin, non seulement son appel au boycott n'a pas eu le succès escompté mais en plus elle perd ces derniers leviers de contre-pouvoirs institutionnels. De plus, ces méthodes de manifestations non violentes paraissent surannées face à la maîtrise des nouvelles technologies par le Président. Enfin, elle souffre d'un manque de propositions politiques : la lutte contre le gouvernement n'est plus un ressort suffisant pour mobiliser les électeurs. La seule certitude est que désormais, A. Vučić, le SNS et leurs alliés sont aujourd'hui maîtres de la Serbie.

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THE WESTERN BALKANS AND THE EU INTEGRATION PROCESS: THE LEGAL AND JUDICIAL PERSPECTIVE

Tudor Vidrean–Căpușan

From the historical point of view, the Western Balkans is the most sensible region of the European Union. It should not be kept in mind the fact that the Western Balkans represented the fuse that sparkled the First World War[1]. After the Second World War, the Western Balkans formed the country of Yugoslavia, the most liberal country from the communist camp[2]. In this period of time, Yugoslavia was an island of stability and peace, but after the events that took place in whole of Europe in 1989, Yugoslavia disintegrated and became the last war zone of Europe.

In the 1990s, the Western Balkans were the ground for the three major wars: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo[3]. In the same period of time, the EU put the basis of its enlargement and extension process to the Eastern part of the continent[4]. In this context, it was a nice surprise that on 1 May 2004, Slovenia was among the new 10 countries members of the EU. The only other country of the Western Balkans that took advantage to become a member of the EU was Croatia on 1 July 2013.

All the other countries of the Western Balkans are still trying to become members of the EU. The enlargement process is still in progress and there are many topics to be settled before new members to accede to the EU. One of the most important topics is the legal issue because the principle of the rule of law is one of the most important foundations of the EU. In this context, the Western Balkans should mandatory be connected to the EU legal framework.

THE EU LEGAL AND JUDICIAL FRAMEWORK

The EU was set up in the 1950s as a response to the catastrophes suffered by the European continent in two world wars. The goals behind

[1] M. Howard, *The First World War*, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 16-17.

[2] V. Meier, *Yugoslavia: A history of its demise*, Routledge, 1999, p. 2.

[3] A. Finlan, *The collapse of Yugoslavia 1991 – 1999*, Osprey Publishing, 2004, p. 15.

[4] C. Hillion, *The Copenhagen Criteria and their Progeny in A. Mayhew (ed), EU Enlargement: A Legal Approach*, Har Publishing, 2004, p. 1.

the creation of the EU were clear: peace, security and prosperity[5]. Althought, the beginings of the European community procces are connected to economic roots such as the European Economic Community that developed into an internal market that protects the free movement of goods, persons, services and capitals, there was a hard work to create a set of values to avoid the repeat of history. This set of values is widely known inside the EU as the principle of the rule of law[6].

The principles of the rule of law covers a very wide area of important aspects: the separations of powers inside a state, the independece of the judiciary, the respect for res judicata etc. Together with the principles of democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms it represents the fundament of the EU in the legal area. As it is known, these principles were formally mentioned for the first time in the European founding treaties following the amendments introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1997.

The amendments brought to the European treaties by the Treaty of Nice represented the following step forward because it proposed the Charter of the Fundamental Rights and Freedoms of the EU were the principle of rule law reflected in many articles. At that time, the Charter represented only a political document, but with no legal power. The Charted became a document with legal power only after the amendments to the European treaties brought by the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force at 1 December 2009[7].

The amendments entered into force at 1 December 2009 also consolidated the role of the principle of the rule of law inside the EU. According to art. 2 of the Treaty of the European Union, the rule of law is among the fundamental values of the Union. Furthermore, according to art. 3 of the Treaty of the European Union, the values attached to the principle of the rule of law are common to all of the member states and are promoted by the Union in its external relations with third countries.

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[5] P. Craig, G. Burca, *EU Law – Text, Cases and Materials*, Oxford University Press, Fifth edition, 2011, pp. 4 – 5.

[6] M. Herdegen, "The Origins and Development of the General Principles of Community Law," in U. Bernitz, J. Nergelius, (eds.) *General Principles of European Community Law*, Kluwer, 2000, pp. 3 – 23.

[7] D. Anderson, C. Murphy, "The Charter of Fundamental Rights", in A. Biondi, P. Eeckhout, S. Ripley (eds.), *EU law after Lisbon*, Oxford University Press, 2021, p. 157.

Respect and commitment to promote these values are required by art. 49 of the Treaty of the European Union for the states who aspire to become members of the European Union, as it is the case of the Western Balkans states. Also, it should be kept in mind that the external action of the Union is shaped by art. 21 of the Treaty of the European Union. Art. 21 asks that Union`s external action to be focused on promoting the principle of the rule of law in the relations with the third countries. In this case, we can say that in the period prior of the accession to the EU, the framework of the economic, financial and technical cooperation between the EU and Western Balkans states will be strongly influenced by the principle of the rule of law.

The importance of the principle of the rule of law in the context of the Western Balkans states accession to the EU was also underlined in the case law of the EU Court of Justice. Accordingly, in the case *Les Verts*[8] the Court of Luxembourg said that „*the European Economic Community is a community based on the rule of law, inasmuch as neither its members States nor its own institutions can avoid a review of the question whether the measures adopted by them are in conformity with the basic constitutional charter, the Treaty....*".

In this context it is important to say that throught this decision the Court confirmed the existence of a system which ensures not only that public authorities adopt measures in compliance with hierarchically superior rules, but also the right of individual to judicial protection of their rights and interests. In the end, it can be said that *Les Verts* case embodied a formal meaning of the principle of the rule of law which esentially corresponds to the existence in the EU legal system of a complete system of judicial remedies aimed to ensure compliance with the fundamental values of the EU.

Moreover, in a subsequent ruling, the case *Union de los Pequenos Agricultores*[9], the Court revealed another interpretation of the principle of the rule of law. In this case, for the first time in its history, the Court said that the notion of the "*Community based on the rule of law* " was invoked with the specific reference to the protection of fundamental rights because "*the European Community is a community based on the rule of law in which its*

[8] ECJ, decision of 23 April 1986, case C-294/83.

[9] ECJ, decision of 25 July 2002, case C-50/00 P.

institutions are subject to judicial review of the compatibility of their acts with the European laws and with the principles of law which include fundamental rights".

Thus, the Court of Justice from Luxembourg has undoubtedly contributed to the definition of the concept of rule of law within the EU legal system and specifically of the notion enshrined in the concept of a Union based on the rule of law. This notion is similar in many aspects to the rule of law paradigm used by the Anglo – Saxon legal system whose essential features are the limitation of public power in order to protect the fundamental individual rights and freedoms and the protection of this rights and freedoms by the judicial system.

As it can be noticed, the EU values represented and represent one of the most important features of the EU. The practice and the reuslts obtained by the EU is a clear success and gain for the European continent, includind the Western Balkans, because in its history, the European continent has never experienced such a long period of peace[10]. During the 20th century, the Western Balkan represented in many times sources of wars, chaos and disrepect for the fundamental values attached to a human being and the adhesion to the EU legal system of values will be useful.

In conclusion of this chapter, we think that the legal and judicial system of the EU it is necessary to the Western Balkans countries development. First of all, it should be pointed out that the EU has created a unique system of supranational regulations such as the founding treaties, charter of the fundamental rights and freedoms, regulations and directive. All of these create a legal background that shapes the relations between member states towards cooperation and friendship.

The best exemple that matches is the reconciliation of the Franco – German historical clashes. The fact that the old Franco – German rivalry is only in the history books[11], is a clear sign that the EU legal framework is a usefull tool that can be applied to the particular situation in Western Balkans region in order to calm down all warmonger feelings.

Secondly, the EU has developed a system of institutions that can ensure the fact there can be no cheating to the established rules. In is

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[10] J.C. Juncker, *In defence of Europe*, speech delivered at the Defence and Security Conference Prague, 2017, available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/SPEECH_17_1581, 1 February 2021.

[11] Y. Sven-Rittelmeyer, *Will Brexit revive the Franco-German engine?*, European Policy Centre, Policy Brief, available at https://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_7379_brexitfranco-germanengine.pdf, 1 February 2021.

important to underline the role of the European Commission through the infringement procedure (art. 258 TFEU)[12] and the European Union Court of Justice through the annullment procedure (art. 263 TFEU) and the preliminary procedure (art. 267 TFEU)[13]. We also belive that the accession of the Western Balkans states to the EU will help eradicte the conflicts between these countries on the ground that the supranational institution will play the role of the policeman for the good sake and wellfare of each individual member state as for the whole Union.

Thirdly, the accession to the EU will help the Western Balkans countries to become better integrated in the international legal system and to avoid many disputes before the international courts (below it will be presented a list of the legal disputes in which Western Balkans states were involved before the international courts) that undermines the diplomatic prestige of the countries members of the international community.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RULE OF LAW PROMOTED BY THE EU IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

In the light of what was explained above, it is clear that the principle of the rule of law is one the main instruments that will shape the relations between the EU and the Western Balkans states. Therefore, it is important to make a summary of how principle of the rule of law influenced up to the present the relations between the EU and the Western Balkans states in particular.

For the beginning, a preliminary reference to the some documents it is neccesary for the a better understading of the subject. In this regard, it should be remembered the Declaration on Yugoslavia and to the Guidlines on the Recognition of new states in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union[14]. In this document, the Council determined that the recognition of the states resulted after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia is subjected to these states commitment to respect the rule of law, democracy and human rights according to the provisions of the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter.

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[12] K. Lenaerts, *EU procedural law*, Oxford University Press, First editon, 2014, p. 159.

[13] K. Lenaerts, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

[14] Available at https://www.dipublico.org/100636/declaration-on-the-guidelines-on-the-recognition-of-new-states-in-eastern-europe-and-in-the-soviet-union-16-december-1991/, consulted 25 February 2021.

Moreover, certain conditions were added by the EU Council Conclusions on the principle of conditionality governing the development of the European Union's relations with certain countries of the former communist bloc.

These conditions consolidated the role of the rule of law in the relations with the former communists states on the following points: freedom of expression, including an independent media, the right of assembly and demonstrations, the right of association, the right to privacy, the right to property, effective means of redress against administrative decisions, access to courts and the right to fair trial, equality before the law and equal protection by the law, freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment and arbitrary arrest.

Based on the EU Council document of 1997, the first EU – Western Balkan states summit was held at Zagreb in 2000[15]. The Zagreb summit represented the announcement of the Stabilization and Association Process (SAP), which represents the EU's political strategy for the Western Balkans. Based on the SAP, from 2004 the EU singed particular Stabilisation and Association Agreements (SAA) with former Yugoslav states as follows: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2004), Croatia (2005), Albania (2009), Montenegro (2010) and Serbia (2010).

In the preambles of all SAAs agreements it is recalled that the commitment of all the parties to standards of the rule of principle is mandatory and the consolidations of the partnership is only possible if the rule of law principle is not breached. In the case of non – compliance with the SAAs provisions, there is the possibility to impose sanctions, even the suspension SAAs effects in cases of serious breaches.

In the end of this chapter, it is important to remember about the Regulation establishing the Instrument for Pre – Accession Assistance (IPA)[16]—the financial assistance program currently used to support the candidate and potential candidate countries of the Western Balkans—not only provides that assistance should primarily support the recipient countries' efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and the rule of law, but it also stipulates that respect for the rule of law—and for democratic principles, human rights and minority rights, and fundamental freedoms—

[15] European Commission, available https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_00_493, consulted at 25 February 2021.

[16] Regulation 1085/17 July 2006, 2006 O.J. (L 210) 82, art. 21.

is an essential element for the application of the regulation and the granting of financial aid.

As it can be noticed, the relationship between the EU and the Western Balkan states was strongly influenced by the principle of the rule of law. The accession of Croatia to the EU in 2013 represents a clear sign that EU strategy based on the rule of law is a correct one and accession of the other Western Balkan states is only a problem of time.

THE PARTICULAR JUDICIAL SITUATION OF THE WESTERN BALKANS

Not only bloodshed wars were fought between Western Balkans countries, but also judicial ones. For instance, the International Court of Justice from Hague was for a couple of times asked to resolve the disputes between the Western Balkans countries. The first case was *Serbia vs. Croatia*[17], the second one was *Serbia vs. Bosnia and Herzegovina*[18] and the third case was *Kosovo declaration of independece*[19]. All these cases had there roots in the wars that took place in the 1990s. In the fist two cases the accusations were extremly hard: genocide crimes. In the first case, the accusations of both parties were dismissed. In the second one, the ICJ declared that a genocide existed, but it lacked the evidence to declare guilty one of the parties.

In the third case, the ICJ declared that Kosovo`s declaration of independence was a valid one from the point of view of the international public law. This decision sparked many hot debates among EU member states because it was considered a decision that encouraged separatism and secession[20]. For example, five EU member states (Spain, Slovakia, Greece, Cyprus and Romania) do not recognize Kosovo as a state.

All of this five EU member states previously to their accession to the EU had major problems with the minorities living on their national territory and with territorial claims. In the case of Spain the problem of the independence of the Basque country was even a source of terrorism and the problem of the independence of Catalonia is still pending with harsh

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[17] ICJ, decision of 3 February 2015, available at https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/118.

[18] ICJ, decision of 27 February 2007, available at https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/91/judgments.

[19] ICJ, advisory opinion of 22 July 2010, available at https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/141.

[20] I. Cismaș, "Secession in Theory and Practice: The case of Kosovo and beyond", *Goettingen Journal of International Law*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2010, pp. 585 – 587.

consequences. Cyprus and Greece are still fighting for the unification of the island of Cyprus after the northern half of the island illegally separated from the rest of the country with the back of a third party, Turkey. The situation of the independence of Kosovo is similar because Albania was behind this move.

Slovakia and Romania had a similar stance because of the menace represented by the secessionist claims made constantly by the Hungarian minorities living on their territories, the Kosovo model being a similar one. But in all this cases, the accession of those countries to the EU helped them to overpass this legacy of the past and to integrate them in the new international and geopolitical system. For example, in 2010 *Hungary sued Slovakia*[21] before the ECJ claiming that the right to free movement of persons was breached by Slovakia when on 21 August 2009 refused access on its territory to the Hungarian president who was in a private visit.

Slovakia motivated its refusal based on the fact that 21 August is a sensitive and sorrow date in the memory of the country because on 21 August 1968 the armies of several countries of the Warsaw Pact, including the Hungarian Army, invaded the territory of Slovakia. In the same, day the Hungarian minority celebrated a holiday related to the times when the current Slovakian territory was part of the Hungarian empire.

In conclusion, the Slovakian government argued that by its decision, prevented the revival of feelings and situations that belonged to the past and are incompatible with the statues of current EU members of both Slovakia and Hungary. The ECJ accepted the point of view of the Slovakian government saying that EU legal and fundamental values cannot accept a situation that can lead to the conflicts between member states. In the end, the Hungarian government accepted the decision of the EU top court and a historical rivalry coming from the past of the European continent was settled by the EU system of values and institutions.

Based on this experience, we can say that by the accession of the Western Balkans countries to the EU will also be useful for eradicating all the sources of conflict between the new member Balkan states, but also for the conflicts between the Balkan states and the older members of the EU.

But it is important to warn that the Western Balkans states bring a very complex and difficult legal heritage to which the EU should pay particular attention. The consequences of this heritage were well noticed in

[21] ECJ, decision of 16 October 2012, case C-364/10.

the case *Slovenia vs. Croatia*[22]. The dispute arose over the land and maritime borders between these two former Yugoslav countries and present EU countries. Slovenia declared in 2009 that accepts Croatia`s accession to the EU under the condition that Croatia will accept to settle the border line before an international referee tribunal.

The two countries engaged before an international referee tribunal and on 1 July 2013 Croatia became member of the EU. But the negotiations were in a stalemate and in 2016 Croatia withdrew unilaterally from the discussions. In 2018, Slovenia lodged a complaint before the EU Court of Justice against Croatia based on art. 259 TFEU asking the Court to declare because of Croatia`s behavior it cannot fulfill its obligations under the EU law. By its decision of 31 January 2020, the EU top Court delivered its decision by saying that the litigation between the two countries is not an EU law problem, but a problem of international public law that is outside the Court`s competences.

The lesson that must be kept in mind is the fact that the Western Balkans judicial heritage can alter the stability of the EU legal system[23]. In this context, it should be remembered the example of Hungary and Poland, countries which for a good period of time are in a situation of open conflict with the EU fundamental rights and freedoms. That why the EU should carefully monitor the situation of the Western Balkans countries and to impose harsh rules that these conflicts should be resolved before those countries accession to the EU.

There is the possibility for the member states to make use of the arbitration tribunals, but as the EU Court of Justice has said in the *Achmea*[24] case, this possibility exists only in the problems that are not covered by the EU law. In this context, in order to have a full compatibility between the legal heritage of the Western Balkans countries and the EU legal system there should be a clear and well definite of the EU concepts and requirements that EU is expecting from each member state.

[22] ECJ, decision of 31 January 2020, case C-458/18.

[23] E. Kassoti, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Court of Justice's Judgment in Case Slovenia v. Croatia", *European Papers*, Vol. 5, 2020, No 2, European Forum, Insight of 28 October 2020, pp. 1069 -1070.

[24] ECJ, decision of 6 March 2018, case C-284/16.

CONCLUSION

In the end, it should be said that the accession of the Western Balkans countries to the EU is a welcomed decision because it will eradicate war from the European continent and will guarantee the peace and security of our continent. But all of these cannot be achieved unless there is a uniform legal system across all of the European Union. This message should particularly send to the Western Balkans which still keep some dark memories of the past and try to revive old rivalries.

The past experiences of the EU with some of members should promote the following message for the Western Balkans: the EU is a union that can help the development of those countries, but only if a certain set of rules is strictly respected. From this perspective it should be recalled that art. 7 of the Treaty of the European Union is the mechanism for safeguarding the respect for the rule of law within member states.

As it is known, art. 7 of the Treaty of the European Union provides that in the case that a member states is responsible for a serious and constant breach of the rule of law system of values of the EU, the EU may impose sanctions on the culprit state, consisting of the possible suspension of certain rights deriving from the statue of EU member state, including the suspension of the voting rights in the EU Council.

Furthermore, it is important to make reference to the situation of other states who joined the EU and were in a similar situation with the Western Balkans states during the period prior to their accession. According to the " Cooperation and Verification Mechanism " established in 2006, Romania and Bulgaria shall annually submit a report to the EU Commission on the progress made in certain priority areas set by the Commission, such as the judicial reform, fight against corruption and organized crime.

Through these reports the Commission has the ability to evaluate the progress made by the two member states in the process of strengthening the principle of the rule of law. The use of this mechanism in relation only with some particular member states, indicates EU`s focus and willingness to intensify the protection of the rule of law, especially in the aftermath of the most recent enlargements.

In this context, it can be said that the EU has a legal instrument that can be used in the relationship with the Western Balkans states for both aims: to guarantee the accession of those states to the EU, but also their commitment to the EU legal and judicial standards.

In this context, the EU legal judicial system are well fitted tools that can help the Western Balkans states to overcome the legacies of the past and to aspire to a better future together with the great European family under the umbrella of the European Union.

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COMPARISON BETWEEN CROATIA'S AND SERBIA'S POLICIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19. DISSIMILAR ACTIONS TAKEN BY TWO POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Tudor Dan, Diana Schuler

Introduction

Our motivation is to discover and prove how two related, still distinctive nationalities can influence the way states have adapted/responded to the new imposed health regulations meant to reduce the exposure to COVID-19, taking into consideration their cultural behavior and heritage. In addition to the actual study of Serbian or Croatian COVID-19 policies, which are obviously conditioned by membership of certain international structures, we consider that an anthropological approach would be adequate in order to better understand the political decisions of the two states.

The aim of this research is to demonstrate that the decision-making process, particularly in the context of a major crisis, is deeply influenced by the specific nature of the society, its essential characteristics and legacies. Social, cultural and religious aspects influence the way in which a decision is formulated and applied. This is much easily perceived or understood when the studied entities are two rather temperamental nations in the Western Balkans region: the Serbs and the Croats.

To demonstrate our purpose, we propose the following research tools: the analysis of the Serbian and Croatian decisions taken in this context. Moreover, the interpretation and highlight of the causes of the protests triggered by the political actions taken over the last half year, will let us be aware of what was the authorities' position towards these revolts and actions taken against the government, too. We expect the previously mentioned research tools to provide us the necessary arguments to confirm our hypothesis, as we strongly believe that adding an analysis of the social reactions would be more suitable than a single analysis of the policy measures itself. The conclusions will be based on the results achieved.

General information about the two countries

Both countries share common historical roots, due to the Slavic heritage and the fact that they have a common language, with few lexical

differences, but the diametrically opposed historical evolution has facilitated two types of development for the two peoples: one oriented towards the East for Serbs and one towards the West for the Croats. This also offered the main cultural differences between the two countries: the Croats use the Latin alphabet because of the Habsburg empire legacy while the Serbs despite of the fact that their Ottoman rule, remained true to Orthodoxy and its proximity to Russia. Important rivalries developed between the two nations, from the conflict between partisans and Ustasi in World War II, to the fratricidal war of the 1990s, the only moments of collaboration between the two nations were those imposed by the Yugoslav state.[1]

Measures of the Government of the Republic of Serbia in state of emergency (15 March – 6 May)

Serbia reported the first COVID-19 case on March 6th. Four days later, on March 10th, Serbia banned the entrance into to country for all foreigners coming from Italy, Hubei Province of the PRC, the city of Daegu, and the North Gyeongsang Province of the Republic of Korea, Iran and the Canton of Ticino of Switzerland. Six days after the first detected case of COVID-19, Serbia banned indoor public gatherings of more than 100 people and closed 44 border crossings for road, railway and river traffic to Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Croatia, Northern Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the following day, on March 13th, Serbia banned all gatherings at outdoor sports facilities and prohibited entrance into the country for all foreigners coming from Romania. On March 14th, Serbia extended the list of countries from which foreigners would be prohibited the entrance: the Republic of France, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Spain, the Republic of Greece and the Swiss Confederation. On March 15th, Serbia closed its borders with the exception of Serbian citizens and those with permanent residence. Nevertheless, they were obliged to remain in home quarantine for 14 or 28 days if returning from the countries listed above, and in case of violation of this regulation they would have been sentenced to three years of imprisonment. On that same day, Serbia

[1] David Blinder, "The Serbs and Croats: So Much in Common, Including Hate", in *New York Times*, 16 May 1991, p. 14, [https://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/16/world/the-serbs-and-croats-so-much-in-common-including-hate.html], date consulted 15 January 2021.

declared the state of emergency. On the following day, on March 16th, the complete lockdown was introduced and all educational institutions were closed. On March 18th, Serbia banned movement of all citizens between 8PM and 5AM. The international border crossing on Nikola Tesla Airport in Belgrade was closed on March 19th, followed by the total border closure for all the passengers on March 20th. Serbian public transport stopped operating on March 22nd, sixteen days since the first detected case and on the same day, the curfew hours were extended from 5AM to 8PM with the exception of Sundays when citizens aged 65 and older were allowed to leave their homes from 8AM until 3PM to go grocery shopping. The gatherings of more than five people in closed areas were prohibited as of March 22nd. From March 28th, the curfew hours on weekends were extended from 5AM until 8PM.[2] During the Easter holidays, people under the age of 65 were prohibited from going outside from Friday, April 17th from 5PM to Tuesday, April 21st at 5AM, as well as during the May Day holidays. On April 21st, reopening of the shops and green markets started and six days later, Serbia reopened hairdresser's shops, beauty parlors, fitness centers and gyms. Interurban bus and rail traffic started operating from May 4th.[3] On May 6th, fifty-two days after the declaration of the state of the emergency, Serbia declared the end of the state of emergency. Two days later, on May 8th, Serbia reopened its borders to all who presented a negative PCR test not older than 72 hours or they would face a 14-day quarantine upon entrance. From May 22nd, Serbia completely opened its borders and lifted all the crossing measures introduced before.[4]

Controversies in Serbia:

The main pandemic controversies began at the start of the year with the public statements of the President of the Serbian Republic and the

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[2] Wolf Thesis, "Serbian Measures to tackle the Effects of Covid-19-Latest Updates", 3 April 2020, [https://www.wolftheiss.com/fileadmin/content/6_news/clientAlerts/2020/Q2/20_04_03_CA_SERBIAN_MEASURES_TO_TACKLE_THE_EFFECTS_OF_COVID-19-LATEST_UPDATES.pdf], consulted 15 January 2021.

[3] Olivera Jovicevic, "Mitigation of measures in the fight against coronavirus", *in Radio Television of Serbia*, 21 April 2020, [https://www.rts.rs/page/tv/ci/story/17/rts-1/3928309/ublazavanje-mera-u-borbi-protiv-virusa-korona.html], consulted 16 January 2021.

[4] Serbian Government Website, 6 May 2020, [https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/464097/skupstina-srbije-ukinula-vanredno-stanje.php], date consulted 16 January 2021.

Minister of Health. Basically, the two main people in charge of crisis management have provided certain statements, right in the middle of the events, which were at least inappropriate for the dramatic context. President Vucic recommends drinking alcohol as a traditional cure for common colds (*Where you put alcohol, the coronavirus does not grow. I found myself an additional reason to drink one glass a day, although it has nothing to do with that alcohol, but I invented it for myself, you know… And Zlatibor said that pure medical alcohol kills the coronavirus*)[5] , while the Minister of Health considered it very easy to produce a vaccine (*If there is a need, we can make a vaccine for coronavirus, and we can help, if it is in the interest of China or someone else, to do it, because we have people who really know that*)[6], and an important pulmonologist of Serbia said the virus is a joke on a social platform (*I cannot believe that the people who survived the sanctions, the bombing, all kinds of harassment, are afraid of the funniest virus in the history of mankind, which exists on Facebook)* and together with serbian tenis player, Novak Djokovic, Serbia should invest in a former idea of Nicola Tesla's time machine.[7] We understand that the Serbian nation has gone through many dramatic events and a form of severe influenza cannot be treated with fear, but we would have expected that at least the high dignitaries gave a responsible speech.

Moreover, the Serbs had an almost non-existent transition between the restrictive measures specific to the lockdown and total freedom. Not a month after the country's general isolation, thousands of Serbs entered stadiums and internationally renowned personalities such as tennis player

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[5] Mila Djurdevic & Andy Heil, "No Joke! Serbian President Makes Light Of Coronavirus As One More Reason To Hit The Bottle", in *Radio Free Europe*, 5 May 2020, [https://www.rferl.org/a/serbian-president-makes-light-of-coronavirus-as-one-more-reason-to-hit-the-bottle/30468925.html], consulted 16 January 2021.

[6] Blic TV Website, " Lončar: Srbija može da napravi vakcinu za KORONAVIRUS, imamo ljude koji to stvarno znaju", February 2020, [https://www.blic.rs/vesti/drustvo/loncar-srbija-moze-da-napravi-vakcinu-za-koronavirus-imamo-ljude-koji-to-stvarno/2y68pkr], consulted 17 January 2021.

[7] Zeljco Trkanjec, "Another Bizarre Step forward by Serbian Doctor Nestorović Talked about corona and Djokovic, so he switched to Tesla's secret project: 'The ship was sent to the future", in *Jutarnji*, 26 April 2020, [https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/svijet/jos-jedan-bizaran-istup-srpskog-lijecnika-nestorovica-pricao-o-koroni-i-dokovicu-pa-se-prebacio-na-teslin-tajni-projekt-brod-je-poslan-u-buducnost-10247911], date consulted 17 January 2021.

Novak Djokovic held demonstration tournaments, even though the Olympics or major sporting competitions were cancelled.[8]

Protests

The 2020 protests in Serbia represent a wave of riots that began at the end of April 2020 during the coronarvirus pandemic. They started on April 26th, 2020 at 8:05PM with people gathering in the streets and banging on sherpas, playing loud music until 9:05AM in cities across Serbia, as a sig of manifesting their disapproval of the ban on movement and the six-week curfew introduced in mid- March (the so-called "Noise against dictatorship") . At the beginning of May, the government eased the measures regarding the movement ban and after a few days, they totally abolished them. In mid- June there was a recurrence of the epidemic, and the government applied again some restrictive measures at the beginning of July, which led to greater dissatisfaction of citizens and a wave of violence and mass riots in Belgrade and throughout the whole Serbia. The protests are an indirect continuation of the previous wave of public discontent, which definitely ended with the outbreak of the pandemic in March.[9]

Croatia's lockdown measures (19 March – 3 May)

The first confirmed cases in Croatia were detected on February 26th, 2020 two imported cases from Italy. Because of the evolving situation in the region and around the world and the first confirmed cases in Croatia being already detected, on March 9th, the Republic of Croatia introduced a fourteen-day quarantine for all who entered Croatia coming from or who have visited Italy, continental China, South Korea, and Iran in the last 14 days. On March 16th, 20 days after the detection of the first confirmed cases of COVID-19 and only five days after the declaration of COVID-19 epidemic in Croatia, the educational institutions (such as kindergartens, schools, and universities) were closed. Twenty-three days after the first confirmed COVID-19 cases, a complete lockdown was imposed, with the

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[8] ABC News Website, "Novak Djokovic's Adria Tour turned into a coronavirus mess, and the tennis world has been scathing", June 2020, [https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-06-24/novak-djokovic-charity-tennis-tournament-became-coronavirus-mess/12387086], consulted 18 January 2021.

[9] BBC Website, "Coronavirus: Belgrade protesters storm Serb parliament over curfew", June 2020, [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53332225], consulted 18 January 2021.

exception on pharmacies and grocery stores that continued to function under strict disease control measures and shorter office hours. On March 22nd, a strong earthquake hit Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, just one week after the complete lockdown was imposed. All public transport, with the exception of taxis, stopped operating, twenty-six days after the first confirmed cases. The restriction of movement within the country (ban on travelling from one country to another) was introduced twenty-seven days after the first confirmed COVID-19 cases. Traveling from one country to another was enabled from April 6th, but only with special E-passes given to individuals meeting certain criteria. Easter holidays in Croatia were held on the weekend of April 12th and the supermarkets and open green markets extended their working schedule three days before Easter until the holiday. The supermarkets finally started operating normal working hours, but with a one-hour break for disinfection since April 24th. Public transport within the cities started operating again from April 27th, 2020.[10]

Loosening measures in three phases

The first stage - opening shops, urban transport, training

In the first instance, it was possible for all business entities engaged in trade activities to function again , except for those operating within the shopping centers. Secondly, it was possible to continue the work of all business entities that performed service activities, except for those in which close contact with clientsis was needed, while respecting measures of physical distance (e.g. shoemaker, tailor, keymaking, tourist agency offices, photo studio, etc). Thirdly, public urban and suburban transport lines and high-speed lines were introduced for islands not connected by ferry service. Fourthly, it was enabled the functioning of libraries, museums, galleries, antique books and bookstores. Fifthly, trainings of sportsmen and athletes of I and II category in individual sports and senior sports teams performing in the highest level of competition are enabled, and sixthly, it

[10] Guy Delauney & Kostas Kallergis, "Coronavirus: Greece and Croatia acted fast, now need to save summer", in *BBC News*, 4 May 2020, [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-52491204], date consulted 18 January 2021.

was possible to conduct a state professional exam for priority groups of participants.[11]

The second stage - the full operation of the health system, hairdressers, beauticians, barbers

First, the operation of the public health system on a full scale was enabled. Secondly, the functioning of the private health system was allowed to be fully implemented with respect to all special epidemiological measures. Thirdly, it was possible to function for all business entities that carried out service activities in which close contact with clients was made, but with the respect of special epidemiological measures, in order to protect both workers and clients (this applies, for example, to beauticians, pedicuers, barbers and hairdressers).[12]

The third stage - gatherings of up to 10 people, reopening of shopping centers, kindergartens, class classes

First, gatherings of up to 10 people in one place were allowed with respect to measures of physical distance. Secondly, shopping centers were allowed to function again in compliance with specific epidemiological measures. Thirdly, preschool institutions and classes from 1st to 4th grade and special class departments and work with children with disabilities who have teaching assistants were reopened. Fourthly, it was possible to hold laboratory, artistic and clinical exercises and practical work in small groups in higher education. Fifthly, inter-county transport and domestic air transport lines were re-established. Sixthly, it was possible to operate catering facilities exclusively on outdoor areas and terraces with respect to special epidemiological measures. Seventh, catering facilities in accommodation facilities are allowed only for accommodation users.

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[11] HRT News Website, "Living with new measures in eight cities", 27 April 2020, [https://vijesti.hrt.hr/hrvatska/video-zivot-s-novim-mjerama-u-osam-gradova-709476], consulted 19 January 2021.

[12] Diana Todorova, "Croatia eases lockdown measures in 3 steps", in *The Mayor*, 24 April 2020, [https://www.themayor.eu/en/a/view/croatia-eases-lockdown-measures-in-3-steps-4845?trans=en-US], date consulted 19 January 2020.

Eighth, national parks and nature parks were opened to the public again. The conditions for issuing e-passes are expanded.[13]

Horizontal measures

First, Croatian people have to respect all measures of physical distance, the highest hygienic standard and disinfection of premises. Secondly, the continuation of compliance with the obligation of employers to ensure working conditions in accordance with epidemiological measures and allow work from home where possible, organize distance meetings and prohibit workers with body temperature and respiratory syndromesfrom coming to the workplace have to be mandatory . Third, the continuation of banning of holding public events and large gatherings. Fourth, it was recommended to wear a cloth face mask in shops and public transport. For this purpose, the Croatian Institute of Public Health drew up and published precise instructions on the use of face masks, protective masks and medical masks. Sixthly, it was recommended that people of older age, people with chronic non-infectious diseases and other people at increased risk of contracting COVID-19 stay at home and that the possibility of infection be as low as possible, as they were considered to be the most vulnerable groups.

Psychological support to citizens of the Republic of Croatia

The Coronavirus pandemic brought uncertainty and different types of losses to the citizens of the Republic of Croatia and the measures implemented to prevent the spread of the epidemic included limited freedom of movement. During this period individuals were limited in contact with their friends, loved ones and were concerned about preserving their own jobs. Uncertainty persisted.

It is common for unpleasant emotions to appear more often in such situations, such as fear, agitation, anger, irritability, boredom, confusion, sadness, helplessness, experience of losing control, dissatisfaction and others. Fear is a normal reaction to potential danger. However, the strength and integrity of these feelings can lead to inability to concentrate, difficulty organizing, difficulty carrying out the intended tasks, listlessness and other

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[13] Juraj Dobrila University of Pula Website, "Opening of shops, public transport and trainings (27th April 2020)", 27 April 2020, [https://www.unipu.hr/en/international-cooperation/news/covid-19_updates?@=2f2ps], consulted 19 January 2020.

reactions that are natural to the new circumstances in which we live. The intensity a person will experience these emotions may vary for each individual.[14]

In order to help citizens cope with these challenges, the Croatian Psychological Chamber, in cooperation with the Croatian Psychological Society and county psychological societies, activated the Network of Psychological Help Hotlines from March to June 2020, covering 25 telephone lines where 150 volunteer psychologists and clinical psychologists were on call for 24 hours. There was also a psychological support hotline for graduates funded as a need to provide psychological support to the group, since most schools in the Republic of Croatia do not meet the minimum requirements of the state pedagogical standard and do not have a full-time employed psychologist. Psychological support has become available to all graduates on the territory of the Republic of Croatia. The reasons for the reporting were different, such as learning difficulties, time organization, emotional relief, problem solving assistance, concrete advice, support, comfort, appeasement, etc. In each hospital, clinical psychologists were available for calls, and over 2000 psychologists were available daily at their workplaces in social welfare centres, family centres, kindergartens and schools and associations.[15]

During the period of movement restriction measures, the production of online psychoeductive texts intensified, of which perhaps the most prominent are those of the Polyclinic for the Protection of Children and Youth of the City of Zagreb, directed to children and parents, of the Zagreb Psychological Society who, over a period of time, wrote daily about practical exercises to increase optimism. The project How Si, in which psychology students , under the mentorship of Professor Natasha Jokić Begić, wrote and reported in cooperation with the Srednja.hr portal on dealing with current topics, mostly directed graduatesand high school students, and tips on the official coronavirus page of the Republic of

[14] Ken Goodman, "Flatten the Fear with Facts: What is an Appropriate Level of COVID-19 Worry and the Steps You Can Take to Reduce Anxiety", in *Anxiety and Depression Association of America*, 23 November 2020, [https://adaa.org/learn-from-us/from-the-experts/blog-posts/consumer/flatten-fear-facts-what-appropriate-level-covid], consulted 20 January 2020.

[15] Martina Gelencir, "Psychological support line for graduates launched: You can come forward because of learning disabilities, but also for other reasons", in *Srednja*, 13 May 2020, [https://www.srednja.hr/matura/pokrenuta-linija-psiholosku-podrsku-maturantima-mozete-se-javiti-zbog-teskoca-ucenju-iz-drugih-razloga/], date consulted 20 January 2020.

Croatia, such as topics on job loss, coping with stress and others. Various webinars on the topic of mental health were also held to remind that in addition to physical care, the mental health of man is also important. The number of webinars has skyrocketed thanks to epidemiological protection measures. The Ministry of Interior , the Polyclinic for the Protection of Children of the City of Zagreb and the Agency Degordian jointly launched the campaign "Behind the Gate", which aimed to warn about domestic violence and make all of the citizens aware to not turn a blind eye and report the violence that is taking place nearby.[16]

Results

As regards the evolution of Coronavirus cases in the two countries, at least in the first part of the pandemic, Croatia's strategy, based on stability, understanding and social support, has proven to be more efficient than that of Serbia. Although both states faced events that could have made a negative contribution to the current crisis, namely: the Zagreb earthquake, the Belgrade protests, the attitude of the Serbian authorities and parliamentary elections, Croatia, has wisely managed the overall situation and the challenges encountered. As a general matter, we can note that the pragmatism of the Habsburg legacy proved to be better than the fiery, purely Balkan spirit of the Serbs, who first denied, then acted, unlike the Croats, who understood the danger from the very beginning. Another point from which the difference between the two social approaches is clear was the June-July 2020 moment, a period associated with the relaxation of measures after the first wave. At the time, Croatia approached a step-by-step strategy, while Serbia abruptly removed most of the restrictions. Moreover, while in Belgrade Serbian citizens went to football and tennis matches, concerts or protests, the Croatian state invested in moral support, through funding psychologists from all over the country to provide the necessary support for this crisis, focusing (also) on the emotional impact. In the case of the Serbian protests, it should be recalled that it was triggered precisely by the fear (psychological factor) of Serbian citizens of new restrictions proposed by the government, as a result of a further increase in the number of cases.

[16] Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia Website, "Behind this door lives Mia", 10 April 2020, [https://policija.gov.hr/vijesti/iza-ovih-vrata-zivi-mia/4591], consulted 20 January 2020.

In numbers, this transitional period was recorded as follows: Croatia has had three times fewer Coronavirus cases than Serbia, taking into account the number of inhabitants of both countries. This strategic approach that has been proved to be efficient can still be noticed today, in the middle of the second wave.

Conclusions

The specificity of a nation, whether we refer to negative characteristics or to its qualities, is the result of centuries of positive and negative influences on the part of neighboring peoples or invaders, of reactions to major events such as wars or political crises, but also of religions that have shaped new mindsets based on the traditions and perceptions of that cult.

Each people acts in the way they have been taught to act throughout history. The pandemic caused by the new coronavirus cannot change the mindsets of peoples whose thinking style could not be changed by dozens of wars and other historical dramas. Certainly, the approach to 2020's health crisis differs from state to state, both in terms of material capacities (infrastructure, funds, etc.) and because of the psychology of the people of that state. We could clearly see this in the case of Serbia, whose people revolted when the sanitary measures provided for the restriction of some freedoms, but also in the case of Croatia, which managed the whole situation gradually, with more patience and caution than their Serbian neighbors, who represent not a foreign people, but perhaps only a "cousin who followed another path". Therefore, the conclusion is a clear one, the decision-making process within a state must take into account any kind of reaction from the population, a solution that for another state has proved to be appropriate may not be as performant for another state if it is not adapted to the way of understanding and acceptance of the people of that state.

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Part V:

Miscellanea

IL FENOMENO "ORFANI BIANCHI" VISTO DAGLI ITALIANI

Violeta Popescu

Il tema degli *orfani bianchi (associato negli ultimi anni ad un altro fenomeno sociale "il sindrome Italia") è* diventato dieci anni fa una vera emergenza in molti paesi dell'Est Europeo segnati da una forte emigrazione femminile. Dopo l'ingresso della Romania nell'Unione Europea, il fenomeno ha assunto una dimensione eccezionale. In particolare, la realtà viene approfondita in seguito all'emergenza creata in Romania, collegata in particolare agli anni 2009-2010 quando risale da una ricerca Unicef e l'associazione Alternative Sociale (AAS), un numero da circa 350 mila bambini con entrambi i genitori all'estero una cifra che va ben oltre quella ufficiale accreditata dall'Autorità Nazionale Romena per la Protezione dei Bambini, che si fermava a 82.464.

Emerge il fatto che fino alla ricerca condotta da Unicef, il tema fu raramente affrontato dai media italiani, nonostante l'Italia essendo sia una delle principali mete dei lavoratori e delle lavoratrici dell'Est. Tali cifre crearono a quel tempo, uno shock emotivo nell'opinione pubblica italiana. Tra 'l'altro Italia ha iniziato ad avere un crescente interesse per questo fenomeno essendo il Paese che si presenta con più alta richiesta in Europa di lavoratori domestici. Secondo il *Primo Rapporto Annuale sul lavoro* domestico pubblicato nel 2019, redatto da Domina, associazione nazionale famiglie datori di lavoro domestico, il 35% di colf e badanti presenti in tutta Europa lavora in Italia. Fino alla ricerca condotta da Unicef, il tema fu raramente affrontato dai media italiani, nonostante l'Italia essendo sia una delle principali mete dei lavoratori e delle lavoratrici dell'est.

Dopo alcune ondate di antipatia nei confronti della presenza comunità romena in Italia [in particolare nel 2008 "il caso Mailat"] si rivelavano con i dati rilasciati da UNICEF le facce nascoste dell'immigrazione – l'esistenza degli *orfani bianchi* - sicuramente un capitolo molto triste, una faccia nascosta dell'emigrazione non solo in Italia ma in tutta l'Europa -– vite spezzate, famiglie rovinate e in genere una società più povera in valori cui rapportarsi, dove i giovani respingono l'idea di vivere in Romania e sognano a loro volta di emigrare - spiegano i sociologi.

In seguito alla ricerca condotta da UNICEF associazioni oppure fondazioni italiane [es. Fondazione Albero della Vita, Fondazione Migrantes, Caritas Italiana] si sono impegnate nel monitoraggio del fenomeno, per organizzare dei tavoli di lavoro al fine di poter sensibilizzare l'opinione pubblica italiana, informare e educare dei giovani e gli adulti italiani, su un aspetto dell'immigrazione che non veniva raccontato dai mezzi di informazione. L'obbiettivo di queste iniziative: offrire un punto di vista per capire cosa significa per una persona, in particolare un figlio o una figlia, vedere partire i genitori lontani di casa, che per garantire a loro la sopravvivenza sono costretti a lasciare tutto dietro. Mostrare le emozioni ed i sentimenti che le vittime di questo fenomeno vivono e come essi reagiscono, ci ha permesso poi di comprendere meglio l'immigrazione come fenomeno sociale, ma soprattutto di instaurare con queste persone un rapporto empatico.

Ha contributo alla compressione di questa realtà anche i primi saggi pubblicati da diversi autori romeni e italiani, tra quale, l'edizioni bilingue: "Il villaggio senza madri - Satul fără mămici" della scrittrice romena Ingrid B Coman, ed. Rediviva, 2012]. "Mi sono soltanto messa il ascolto – confessa la scrittrice - in rispettoso silenzio, in quei momenti sacri della giornata in cui tutto tace (…) e allora si può sentire, appena sussurrata, la voce nascosta e misteriosa di chi non parla mai, ma manda fuori nel mondo le vibrazioni del proprio cuore, affinché qualcuno possa raccoglierle e raccontarle". Ingrid Beatrice Coman "*ha scritto questo testo* – considera lo scrittore italiano Raffaelle Taddeo - *come un omaggio a quei bambini che per molte cause si trovano senza madri perché sono dovute andar via per ragioni di lavoro o altro, mostrando così estrema sensibilità ad un problema che spesso si dimentica e si sottovaluta. Sono 10 racconti scritti in due versioni, romeno e italiano. Il punto di vista è sempre quello del bambino/a che guarda agli avvenimenti senza comprenderli perché sono privati del loro affetto più naturale e più necessario, quello della madre. Dieci racconti per narrare la sofferenza di un figlio/a privato dell'affetto della madre, e di sofferenza si tratta così acuta che a volte rischia di portare a sentimenti estremi, a gesti estremi ed inspiegabili, come quello di non poter scrivere la "m" insieme alle altre lettere dell'alfabeto perché quella lettera è segno della mancanza, dell'assenza di una persona e non può essere scritta, così come era impossibile per gli ebrei cantare in terra straniera* […], El Ghibli, 2014.

A questo fenomeno se ne aggiunge un altro denominato "sindrome italiana", nome ideato da due psichiatri ucraini per spiegare la depressione

tra tante donne tornate in patria dall'Italia, dove per anni avevano lavorato come badanti, spesso per 24 ore al giorno.

Una delle prime iniziative importanti fu avviata dalla Fondazione Albero della Vita ONLUS che nel 2010 presenterà a Strasburgo un dossier chiedendo un intervento di aiuto per i minori. Il dossier fu presentato di una delegazione di membri italiani del Parlamento Europeo di Strasburgo per sensibilizzare le istituzioni europee e sollecitare un intervento per questa delicata situazione. L'iniziativa è stata accolta di europarlamentari italiani sensibili al tema dei diritti dell'infanzia. «Quello degli "orfani bianchi" della Romania», ha dichiarato a quel tempo il Presidente de L'Albero della Vita Patrizio Paoletti «è un fenomeno che non riguarda soltanto le persone direttamente colpite ma tutti i cittadini dell'Unione. L'iniziativa e stata seguita da un importante convegno organizzato a Milano, al Palazzo delle Stelline – dal titolo: *La famiglia transnazionale e gli 'orfani bianchì nella Moldavia romena nell'Anno Europeo 2010 per la lotta contro la povertà e l'esclusione sociale. (2010)*

A causa di una situazione sociopolitica ed economica complessa, negli ultimi anni il fenomeno dell'emigrazione dalla Romania verso i paesi europei è in continua crescita. Molti genitori devono partire per migliorare le condizioni di vita della famiglia, lasciando a casa i loro bambini. Gli "orfani bianchi", sono vittime involontarie della migrazione e subiscono veri e propri traumi emotivi e psicologici, oltre ad essere spesso i più esposti a violenze e abusi. Le organizzazioni umanitarie stanno collaborando tra loro e con le Istituzioni per far fronte a questa problematica che sta assumendo proporzioni preoccupanti. Il convegno ha permesso l'approfondimento il profilo della famiglia transnazionale, di entrare nel contesto rumeno, e di conoscere la condizione delle famiglie rumene migrate in Italia. Il convegno fu molto mediatizato a quel tempo, non solo in Italia ma anche la stampa romena prese molto in considerazione l'iniziativa. In seguito alla presentazione di questa ricerca associazioni oppure fondazioni italiane [es. Fondazione Albero della Vita, Fondazione Migrantes, Caritas Italiana] si sono impegnate nel monitoraggio del fenomeno, per organizzare dei tavoli di lavoro al fine di poter sensibilizzare l'opinione pubblica italiana, informare ed educare dei giovani e gli adulti italiani, su un aspetto dell'immigrazione che non veniva raccontato dai mezzi di informazione. Seguirà poi a Roma nel marzo 2010 il convegno su "L'integrazione dei romeni in Italia tra famiglia e lavoro", organizzato nell'ambito della Settimana d'azione contro il Razzismo

promossa dall' l'Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali con la collaborazione del Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, quando fu inserito nell'dibattito una discussione in riguardo alla problematica degli "digli sospesi", evento in collaborazione con l'Ambasciata di Romania in Roma.

Sempre a Roma, dopo nel 2014 - viene organizzato il convegno all'livello nazionale: La *famiglia nel processo migratorio, tra distanze e ricongiungimenti*, programmato in occasione della 20° Giornata Internazionale della Famiglia che si è svolto presso la Sala del Mappamondo della Camera dei Deputati. L'evento fu stato promosso dall'onorevole Khalid Chaouki, in collaborazione con A.D.R.I. – Associazione delle Donne Romene in Italia – e SOLETERRE, Strategie di Pace ONG Onlus. L'incontro ebbe come tematiche nello scenario delle migrazioni internazionali, la mobilità familiare diventata un fenomeno sempre più rilevante: famiglie che si separano e che si ricongiungono, tracciando e animando spazi sociali transnazionali, segnati da relazioni a distanza (di natura affettiva, culturale ed economica) che impattano sullo sviluppo tanto dei Paesi di origine che di destinazione. Un'iniziativa molto accolta e di grande impatto per l'opinione pubblica italiana il documentario andato in onda sulla Rai, *Figli sospesi* servizio speciale del TG1 a cura di Alessandro Gaeta. La telecamera si fermava sulle madri – in questo caso romene – emigrate in Italia per cercare lavoro e mandare soldi alla famiglia – poi "partiva" e passava per un momento nella frenetica e caotica Bucarest, infine si inoltrava nell'entroterra. Anche qui, le immagini erano quelle di bambini piccoli e piccolissimi abbandonati a qualche parente, generalmente indigenti, o di stanze fatiscenti di adolescenti rimasti soli, ragazzi e ragazzi dagli occhi vuoti, che un tempo erano poveri ma almeno ricchi di un legame essenziale, e ora sono un poco meno poveri ma hanno perso tutto: la voce, il corpo, l'abbraccio di una madre. Tutti quanti figli di donne romene, moldave, ucraine costrette a partire dalla disoccupazione dilagante e dall'assenza, quasi sempre, degli uomini, spesso violenti, spesso semplicemente fuggiti.

Da notare poi una serie di approfondimenti nei diversi quotidiani: la Repubblica, Corriere della Sera, Est Journal ecc.: In viaggio verso la Moldavia romena - 2011; Romania, la vita spenta degli orfani bianchi 07/11/2011; Orfani bianchi, i figli dell'allargamento 17/06/2010; Romania: una generazione resiliente, 30/03/2015; Romania e Moldavia: gli orfani bianchi 22/08/2017. *Nel 2013* edizioni Einaudi pubblicò nella

collana "I coralli" il volume: Miei *cari figli vi scrivo*, romanzo autobiografico di Lilia Bicec. Nel testo della scrittrice emerge quasi il repertorio tematico che si legge in *Orfani bianchi*: una donna che si reca in Italia; la memoria di figli lontani; la promessa di giorni migliori per loro e per sé; la sfiducia degli italiani, la loro circospezione, la diffidenza. (dalla recensione del libro, Einaudi). (…) Per non dimenticare la sua storia e la storia della sua famiglia inizia a scrivere lunghe lettere ai figli rimasti in Moldova, e intesse un universo di parole che diviene il filo potente di una memoria intima che è allo stesso tempo quella di un intero popolo, di una terra divisa e conquistata. "Questa è la mia storia – dice, – ma è anche quella del mio Paese: è la mia tragedia, ma è anche la tragedia di tante altre madri". Miei cari figli, vi scrivo – è il diario intimo e il testamento della diaspora di un intero popolo [di Maria Camilla Brunetti, Il reportage, 2013].

L'anno 2017 porta alla pubblicazione del libro: Orfani bianchi di Antonio Manzini, edito di Chiaralettere, Milano. Lo scrittore Antonio Manzini racconta la genesi del suo romanzo 'Orfani bianchì dedicato ad una parte di immigrazione poco conosciuta, quella delle badanti che lasciano spesso i propri figli in orfanotrofio per venire in Italia ad accudire persone anziane o malate.

Di grande interesse gode anche il volume bilingue della stessa scrittrice romena Ingrid Beatrice Coman: *Badante per sempre*, edito da Rediviva, Milano, nel 2015. La scrittrice *I.B.Coman Prodan ci tiene a sottolineare*: *"Occorre maggiore sensibilità e si deve stare attenti a non ferire ulteriormente quell'umanità su cui posa lo sguardo e ne ritrae la storia. Lavorare all'estero non rende una madre snaturata e irresponsabile per definizione. Non mi stancherò mai di ribadire quanta responsabilità ci sia nella penna di chi scrive. Prestiamo i nostri occhi per vedere. Il nostro cuore per sentire. Lasciamo allora che la verità guidi la nostra penna. È un atto di giustizia, a volte l'unico ancora possibile, verso gli altri e anche verso noi stessi."* Il tema del racconto è anticipato dalla copertina che ci accoglie con un messaggio d'amore – "prenderci cura gli uni degli altri ci tiene in vita" – *"Se dimentichiamo di prenderci cura gli uni degli altri, l'intero si disgrega e, in seguito all'implosione, l'unica libertà che ci resta è quella dell'annientamento" (*Magda, la protagonista).

Il testo più recente che tocca assieme le due triste realtà, dal titolo: *Sindrome italiana. Chi bada alle badanti*? [2008, www.culturaromena.it], appartiene allo scrittore Armando Santarelli. "I dati emersi – afferma l'autore- non sono incoraggianti. Negli ultimi dieci anni, sono più di

tremila i casi di donne romene arrivate in Italia per fare le badanti o le colf e colpite dalla "Sindrome Italia". Nell'anno 2017, circa 170 donne reduci dall'Italia, dalla Spagna e dalla Germania si sono rivolte agli psichiatri del Socola – Iasi, perché sofferenti di patologie legate al lavoro svolto; il numero è in aumento, come mostrano i dati riferiti ai primi mesi del 2018 e il raffronto con gli anni precedenti. È opportuno precisare che nell'Ospedale Psichiatrico Socola sono ricoverate (o assistite) badanti provenienti principalmente dalle Regioni del nord-est della Romania; dunque, considerando l'intera Nazione, dove sorgono altri centri di cura per la "sindrome italiana", i casi sono molto maggiori, ed è assolutamente giustificato parlare di un fenomeno sociale grave e preoccupante".

Ecco solo tracciate alcune iniziative sia da parte italiana che romena nell'arco del tempo 2010-2018, iniziative mirate a sensibilizzare l'opinione pubblica sia italiana che romena su una realtà che richiede maggior attenzione, maggior approfondimento.

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PEACE EDUCATION IN TIMES OF CONFLICT: INTEGRATED EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND, CYPRUS AND ISRAEL

Amin Khalaf

1. Introduction

Israel, Northern Ireland and Cyprus are three countries where conflicts between two ethnic groups have been going on for generation. In all three, efforts to promote peace agreements have also been going on for years – with more success in Northern Ireland, less so in Israel and Cyprus. But how where these efforts to promote peace and dialogue implemented in the education systems in those three countries? And what can we learn from comparing these efforts?

The present article will present findings from an extensive research in the integrated bilingual schools and compare them to studies of integrated or multicultural schools in Northern Ireland and Cyprus. I will briefly review the case in each country and try to identify points of similarity and difference between them. In this comparison I will seek to examine

- What kinds of integrated schools were erected (or not erected) in each country.
- What kinds of policies the Ministries of Education had developed regarding education for peace and co-existence in such schools.
- Which of the four models of multiculturalism (conservative, liberal, pluralistic or critical) are held by principals leading multicultural schools in all three countries.

The analysis of the integrated schools in Northern Ireland and Cyprus will be based on professional literature as well as websites and other information sources. The sources for the Israeli test case will be based on unique materials developed during the present research. The findings show that:

- o State policy deeply influences the extent of success and possibility of integrated schools to bring about the social change principals seek to promote.
- o This policy is affected by the state of conflict: when there is a peace agreement between sides (as in Northern Ireland), the state has an interest in promoting integrated schools in the education system. When

there is no such agreement (as in Israel and Cyprus) the state has no interest in supporting or initiating such initiatives (as in Cyprus) or it allows them but does not allocate the necessary resources (as in Israel).

2. Three Countries in Conflict, Three Education Systems

2.1 Background

Northern Ireland, Israel and Cyprus all suffer from ongoing territorial conflicts between two communities sharing a common space, but existing separately. In Northern Ireland, separation between the Protestant and Catholic communities has existed since the 17th century, in Israel, separation between Jewish and Arabs has increased since 1948, and in Cyprus, separation between Cypriots of Greek and Turkish origin, goes back to Ottoman times, and was 'sealed' during the 1974 war. In each of these conflicts, relations between communities are characterized by suspicion and lack of trust, with each community tending to blame the other for the conflict and its outcomes. At the same time, personal identity is determined in relation to group identity, against a religious or national background, with a tendency to attribute entrenched and fixed identities to individuals on the basis of their belonging to a specific group. (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2013; McGlynn, 2008; Bekerman, 2009).

Despite this separation and animosity, integrated schools were established in two of those countries – Northern Ireland and Israel. In Cyprus they do not exist, but students of Greek and Turkish identities study together in international school (Zembylas, 2013), and the Ministry of Education has developed an intercultural policy for all schools. Altogether, the three countries can serve as interesting case studies for comparison.

2.2 Educating for Peace amidst conflict

The national struggle between Jews and Arabs in *Israel* has been going on since the beginning of the 20th century with separation between communities. The first integrated bilingual school was established in 1984 at the Neve Shalom settlement. In 1998, the Hand in Hand association established two additional integrated bilingual schools for Jews and Arabs, in the Galilee and Jerusalem, in which studies are conducted in Hebrew and Arabic, and additional schools were later added to the list (Weininger, 2019).

The Israeli Ministry of Education authorized the parents and non-governmental organizations' initiatives to establish schools, and they were recognized as official schools. However, the Ministry did not develop a formal definition for integrated bilingual educational institutions. One of the few formal mentions of this educational initiative can be found in a document written by the Knesset Research Institute, which states that the ministry *"encourages diversity and uniqueness in the education system looking at the world into which education system's graduates will enter. Recognition of integrated bilingual schools is carried out by the Committee for Special Regional Education at the Ministry of Education, in a similar manner to how other special schools are approved"* (Weininger, 2019).

The integrated bilingual schools in Israel strive for equality between Jews and Arabs as well as for equality between the languages, cultures, and national narratives in school space. This is expressed by the presence of two teachers, one Jewish and one Arab in class at the same time, which requires resources over and above those allocated by the Ministry of Education according to normal budgetary allocation. As was found in the present research, additional resources needed to operate the integrated bilingual model are raised independently by schools through donations and parental payments, which contributes to the fact that most students in these schools are from a medium-high socio-economic background and educated families whereas students from a low socio-economic status, comprise a small percentage of the overall population of these schools.

Today, there are seven integrated bilingual elementary schools, one high school and at least fifteen kindergartens in Israel. The parents who send their children to these schools because of the commitment to multiculturalism. Analysis of the report by the Knesset Research Institute (Weininger, 2019) revealed that during the years 2013-2019 there was an increase of approximately 58% in the number of students studying at integrated bilingual schools, but their ratio to the overall number of students in the education system was extremely low (approximately 1700 students out of about 2.1 million). The report also revealed that the majority of students at these schools are Arabs (approximately 63% in 2013 and 58% in 2019), a gradually moderating trend with the increase in percentage of Jewish students.

In *Northern Ireland,* autonomously managed subject to the British parliament, learning was conducted in two separate education system frameworks: one for Protestants, who generally studied in state schools,

and one for Catholics, most of whose schools belonged to the church. The first integrated (shared) school was established in 1981. Following a struggle led by civil society, shared education became official policy and is supported institutionally and financially by the state. Most these schools have mixed Catholic and Protestant principals and teaching staff and higher proportion of Protestant students. Around the end first decade of the 2000, Catholics made up between 10-50% of students (Bekerman et al., 2009). Interestingly, integrated schools in Ireland show an inverse demographic trend to general society. More Protestant students, who are in fact a minority outside school walls, whereas the Catholic majority constitutes a minority in these schools. This may be due to the fact that Catholics traditionally go to church schools, which have a good reputation, and so – unlike the Arabs in Israel, who have no good educational alternatives, they are less interested in the opportunities offered by the shared education.

The website of the Northern Ireland Education Authority presents the Shared Education Act of 2016. According to the law, educational authorities must abide by it and promote and encourage shared education. Further, the authority claims that shared education pertains to students with different religious affiliations (predominantly Protestants and Catholic), as well as to students who are socio-economically disadvantaged and those who are not, so that both populations get equal opportunities and work together. The purpose of shared education is to provide benefits and promote equality of opportunities and good relations between populations, including mutual respect and social cohesion. As of February 2020 60,000 students were enrolled in shared schools in Northern Ireland (https://www.eani.org.uk/parents/shared-education)

In *Cyprus*, where the struggle between Greeks and Turks has been ongoing since the start of the British rule in 1878 or even earlier, no shared schools have been erected. This may be understandable when considering the fact that since the Turkish invasion in 1974, the two populations have been living in two different political entities – the (unrecognized) Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on the one hand, and the Republic of Cyprus on the other. During the ethnic cleansing which led to this state, around 150,000 people were expelled from the occupied northern part of the island, and roughly 60,000 Turkish Cypriots, amounting to half the Turkish Cypriot population, were displaced from the south to the north. (Pericleous, 2009). Although restrictions were lifted in 2003 and border

crossing was possible again, the two populations still live mainly in two separate states, which means that the common infrastructure of civil society and parents initiatives which enabled the establishment of the integrated schools in Northern Ireland and Israel simply did not exist in Cyprus.

In addition, according to Psaltis et. al (2017) "The role of education in the peace- building process is a subject that the relevant authorities in Cyprus have consciously or unconsciously ignored or have not addressed properly. Although there are seemingly never-ending diplomatic efforts towards reunification, the equivalent political will to invest in education as a tool for building a culture of peace has so far been absent" (ibid, p. 417). According to Zembylas (2013) "It is meaningless to talk about the establishment of integrated schools in Cyprus without first constructing opportunities for more sustained and productive contact between children and young people from the two conflicting communities. Therefore, integrated schools in Cyprus will not be invented overnight. Yet, investing in meaningful shared educational experiences in schools, starting with simple things, and simultaneously setting high standards for schools to educate a future generation with respect, recognition, and reconciliation will enhance the vision and practice of a qualitatively different shared education" (p. 452).

This lack of integrated schools shows the difference between Cyprus on the one hand, and Israel and Northern Ireland on the other hand. However, as will be described below, there are private and international schools where students from different countries (immigrants), local students from the Greek-speaking community and few local students of Turkish origin (less than 10%) study together. The language of education in these schools is English, and although they were not formally erected in order to deal with the conflict, they may serve as a basis for comparing the integrated education in Cyprus to the integrated schools in Northern Ireland in Israel (Zembylas & Iasonos, 2010).

3. Peace Education and Interpretations of Multiculturalism

Integrated schools in societies where two communities exist side by side at a state of ongoing conflict, such as Israel and Northern Ireland, have to cope with a gap between the visions of the schools which seek to promote more equality, and the reality of inequality in the 'outside world'. These schools exist in the shadow of conflict while trying to educate for peace of co-existence.

Education for peace is understood as an educational process which focuses on promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values meant to bring about change in behavior in relation to others and hence, to create conditions enabling peace agreements Education for co-existence is understood as an educational process principally aimed at improving inter-group relations, as a basic condition for harmonious relations (Fountain, 1999). This approach consciously focuses on recognizing the rights of others to exist in peace as different, and their acceptance as legitimate and equal partners to resolve disputes without violence (Bar-Tal et al., 2004). The purpose of multicultural education is to create equal educational opportunities for students from racial, ethnic, social and status diversity, by emphasizing unity at the same time as cultural differences (Banks, 2004).

Different researchers have proposed different classifications of multicultural approaches examining the extent of unity or social diversity in a given society. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997) proposed four main approaches to multiculturalism in education:

1. Conservative multiculturalism/monoculturalism, which aims at integrating members of the minority culture into the dominant culture of the majority. This approach is based on a hierarchical cultural view, which places western culture as superior to other cultures.
2. Liberal multiculturalism which emphasizes the similarity between diverse groups in society, and particularly the view that they are part of common humanity. This approach ascribes gaps and inequality between groups in society to an absence of educational opportunities.
3. Pluralist multiculturalism which recognizes the possible contribution of multiculturalism but demands agreement on common values as a condition of shared living.
4. Critical multiculturalism which recognizes balances of power as a basis of inequality and formulating dominant discourse. Supporters of this view argue that the role of the education system is to bring about social change.

Although the four positions employ the term ‘multiculturalism’, in practice they are based on four different systems of values and attempt to promote different social change processes. The present chapter article will look at the multicultural attitudes of school directors in the three different countries.

3.1 Northern Ireland

In an article written in 2008, McGlynn analyses interviews held with integrated school principals in order to place them along the conservative-liberal-pluralist-critical continuum. She comes to the conclusion that in Northern Ireland most integrated schools are managed by principals with a liberal or pluralistic view of multiculturalism. This approach seeks to emphasize what is common between students, and is based on ideals such as individual freedom and equality, while ignoring issues of power balances between groups. Hence, there is a risk of flattening out the differences between groups or making them seem superficial, which is likely to sabotage attempts to bring about social justice and democracy. McGlynn quotes a principal who did not believe there was any point talking about change among students:

"I think it belittles them [the pupils] to sit them down and say we've got two different backgrounds, two different traditions – they know exactly where they're coming from. They know what the problems are, they've heard it all their days and they know about people going to different schools and different religions, different churches and really we just see ourselves as a way of educating all those different children together." (McGlynn 2008, p. 9).

One can see in this approach an attempt to provide neutral education, of multiple individuals from different groups who share a common space.

Pluralistic multiculturalism, in contrast, emphasizes precisely differences and not what is common between people from different groups. This model seeks to celebrate differences between individuals while ignoring dimensions of existing power relations between groups and hence is likely to strengthen the unequal status quo between them. McGlynn quoted a principal who emphasized the celebration of differences but did not seek to challenge the political order that caused it:

"Being an integrated school is not about joining the [middle ground] or giving up your Catholic or Protestant faith. It's being able to enjoy, respect and honor other people's point of view. We have people on the staff with fairly strong political points of view … you don't have to wash down or dilute your feelings." (McGlynn 2008, p.10).

How do these positions compare with those of Cypriot or Israeli principals of such schools?

3.2 Cyprus Principals

In spite of the lack of schools which would be established specifically to deal with the Greek-Turkish conflict, principals of schools in Cyprus must also deal with the conflict and with multiculturalism in their schools. According to Zembylas and Iasonos (2010) most principals interviewed in a research in Cyprus hold conservative views regarding positive educational perceptions of multiculturalism and see multiculturalism primarily as an obstacle to a homogenous society. Principals with this attitude tended to manage diversity to subjugate it to the ruling Greek culture. Other cultures were perceived as negatively influencing Greek-Cypriot culture and therefore principals aspire to assimilate migrant children, as seen in the words of a principal with a conservative approach:

"We provide the issue of diversity the necessary attention, but we do not stop providing education as it should be offered to all children … everything is done according to the guidelines provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture …We respect the particularity of foreigners, we respect their roots, but all within the context of the Ministry's guidelines." (Zembylas & Iasonos 2010, p. 176)

This principal refers to diversity as a 'phenomenon' that has to be managed but must not go beyond the framework of the Ministry of Education instructions. In contrast, principals holding a critical position viewed multiculturalism as an opportunity or challenge, enriching all society and aspired to promote equality and equal opportunities among groups. Hence, one principal holding this view told researchers:

"Strong leadership in this [multi-ethnic] context … implies the strength to deal with difficult and contentious issues and to critically examine those practices that are routinized or institutionalized in the school and to ask the crucial question, 'who is falling through the net or who is being served by our taken-for-granted ways of doing things." (ibid, p. 180)

For this principal, school is a social change agent helping all students develop multicultural and critical attitudes in relation to the question of power, while developing the ability to see things from different points of view. This is interesting, and the present article goes one step further and tries to explore the views of Israeli principals of integrated schools on these questions.

3.3 Bilingual Integrated Schools in Israel

In Israel, inequality between Arabs and Jews in general society is also reflected in the integrated bilingual schools at all levels, including the division of power between the two sides in school communities, both as a group and as individuals. It is particularly obvious in the issue of language, where the Arabic language is located in a weakened position in relation to the dominant Hebrew, as well as the national narrative dimension in schools. Principals seek to change this situation within the framework of various models of equality: those who adhere to the critical-multicultural model refer to an educational process whose purpose is to improve inter-community relations, by recognizing the narrative and language of the other and dialogue about the inequality between them. For those who adhere to the humanist-liberal model, common humanity between groups is emphasized and its purpose is to promote equal educational opportunities between them. Principals who adhere to the distributive-communitarian model seeks to strengthen group identity by empowering the weaker group to challenge the inequality between them.

One example of the liberal-humanistic view could be found in the words of T.S., a Jewish school director, who explained that

"My ambition is that we will all eventually become humanistic people who are able to ask questions and pass criticism .... I argue that there should be equality, we should live here without constantly referring to this story of Arabs and Jews .... Politics should not be part of the situation at all, almost completely. Unless you push it, you produce this discourse that in my eyes is wrong. Because most of the energy goes to politics, so education is destroyed."

A similar opinion is expressed by an Arab director of another school, Ms. G.M., who explains that the choice of who should become Deputy Director should be decided upon merit.

"The decision on who will be the deputy will be -- based on skills. This means that the deputy may be an Arab ... This symmetry in terms of numbers is less important to me. For me what matters is the quality .... the fact that I am an Arab is not the main issue, it's whether I am a good manager or not."

As our research has shown, there are both Jewish and Palestinian principals who adhere to the liberal model, as well as other Jewish and Palestinian principals who prefer the critical model. One example is Mr. G.K., a Palestinian principal of one of the integrated schools, who explained

he saw his role as strengthening the Palestinian students in view of the existing imbalance of powers.

"Strengthening identities, strengthening the identity of the Arab-Palestinian side, mutual respect, cooperation, teaching the culture of the other all these things ... even the holidays that are not so important there we celebrated them, we empowered them so that there seemed to be balance" he explained.

Similarly, Ms. G.S., the Jewish principal of another school, who also holds a critical view, explains that

"I did not come as an educator. I came from a place of an activist who wants to influence the reality of life in this city, and these kindergartens are a means to influence a community of parents and children ... I was surprised to find out how difficult the situation of the Arab population is, now I say this education, and early childhood education, it is a real means to get the children out of this path."

In my view this is a unique and interesting finding, which shows that contrary to expectations, the national identity of the principals of the integrated schools in Israel does not influence their attitudes.

4. Summary: Integrative Education in a comparative View

Conflict has been ongoing for many years in Northern Ireland, Cyprus, and Israel. Whereas in Israel and Northern Ireland special schools bringing together children from both sides of the conflict have been initiated by parents or civil society, in Cyprus children of Greek or Turkish origin encounter each other only in international schools.

In this situation the question arises to what extent can schools create an environment encouraging cross border links between their students, when the external environment is busy drawing lines between them? Shared education in these three countries have some similarities, but there are also differences, for example the issue of Ministry of Education policy in each country. One can examine this from a number of dimensions, as can be seen in the following table.

Table 1: Integrated Education in Israel, Northern Ireland and Cyprus

	Israel	Northern Ireland	Cyprus
The history of the conflict	Approximately 140 year old territorial conflict between Jews and Palestinians	Conflict between local Catholics and Protestant settlers who arrived from Britain has continued since the 17th century	Conflict between Greek and Turkish residents on the island of Cyprus has continued since the island was conquered by the British in 1878. The island achieved independence in 1960, but in 1974 it was divided to Turkish and Greek areas.
The current situation	Israel controls the whole area. Palestinian Israeli citizens suffer from discrimination, residents in the occupied territories have no rights. In recent years, there have not been any negotiations for peace.	In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement was signed, leaving Northern Ireland under British rule, but allowing its residents to acquire Irish citizenship as well and opening borders between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in the south. This agreement is now at risk due to the Brexit decision	The island remains divided after the 1974 war, but the borders between to two parts were opened in a series of steps in 2003 and 2008. Various attempts to reach an agreement under the auspices of the U.N. have failed
Shared education initiatives	Started in 1984 and continued with the establishment of Hand in Hand in 1997. All	Began in 1981, initiated by parents. Has been growing since, with 60,000 students participating in	There are no organized initiatives for shared education, but students from different communities meet in

	initiatives came from the association or groups of parents. In 2019, 1,700 students were registered in the bilingual schools.	2020.	English speaking international schools.

	Israel	Northern Ireland	Cyprus
The Ministry of Education's attitude towards the initiatives	The Ministry of Education recognized schools and allowed their operation, but did not support the model and budget for the funds necessary to realize it	Shared education became official policy and is institutionally and financially supported by the state	There are no civil society initiatives to promote such schools, and the Ministry of Education also does not promote them.
The involvement of external factors	Most donors are Jews from abroad or European people seeking to promote peace	The European Union supported shared education initiatives	The European Union promotes intercultural education, not all school principals cooperate
The situation today	Today seven integrated bilingual and one high school operate in Israel, as well as 15 kindergartens	In 2020, 60,000 young people were involved in shared education across 600 schools in Northern Ireland alone	Today there are international schools in coastal towns and a process of 'Europeanizing' the education system and directing it to an equal and multicultural ethos

Summing it up, it is clear that multicultural schools in all three countries cope with inequality between their different groups. Zembylas et al. (2016) describe in their study the gap with which international schools where students of Greek and Turkish origin study together have to cope when external reality in Cyprus tends to emphasize entrenched and conflicting views of 'us' against 'them' while schools try to promote multiculturalism. In another article (Zembylas, 2010) they show how most school directors hold conservative views regarding multiculturalism, and in fact believe in the superiority of the Greek culture.

In Northern Ireland, the external dialogue is present in schools and principals adopt the liberal or pluralistic model in relation to difference. Correspondingly, they seek to nurture a shared school identity, recognizing the differences between groups, their unique identities, and celebrating them.

In Israel, the question of multiculturalism arises all the more forcefully in the Hebrew language superiority, and within this also the Jewish narrative. In the schools in Cyprus and Northern Ireland, multiculturalism exists in a neutral language space, because of the use of English. English is common to Protestants and Catholics, or serves as the main shared learning language for all students at international schools in Cyprus. The language dimension in Israel, on the other hand, is a practical day to day question which has several ramifications, as it symbolizes and proves the inequality between the groups, as well as the aspiration to fix it. And, in spite of the growing number of integrated schools which have been erected since 1998 to this day, the number of Arab and Jewish students learning in integrated frameworks is negligible relative to the population as a whole (Yemini et al., 2014). Although the integrated bilingual schools are recognized by the state and receive budgets like all other official schools recognized by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Education does not budget for the special needs of these schools and they are forced to rely on donations and parent payments.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that:

o State policy deeply influences the extent of success and possibility of integrated schools to bring about the social change principals seek to promote.

o This policy is affected by the state of conflict: when there is a peace agreement between sides (as in Northern Ireland), the state has an interest in promoting integrated schools in the education system. When there is no such agreement (as in Israel and Cyprus) the state has no interest in supporting or initiating such initiatives (as in Cyprus) or it allows them but does not allocate the necessary resources (as in Israel).

In other words, this reveals that if at the time the integrated schools were established in Northern Ireland or Israel their founders thought they would contribute to promoting peace, it turns out that this contribution is minimal. Reality has taught us that the process is reverse – and it is only after a peace agreement is signed (as happened in Northern Ireland) that there is state support for integrated schools and they can contribute to improving relations between the communities. Only after a peace agreement has been signed is it possible to identify massive investment in educational and physical infrastructure that support integration projects. In Cyprus, where efforts to promote peace also ended in a deadlock, no integrated schools were established – again showing the influence of the state of the conflict on the possibility of establishing such schools, rather than the other way round.

A final look at this comparative review shows that Israel is "in a good place in the middle". Unlike in Cyprus, which has no integrated schools for students of Turkish and Greek origin and where such students meet only in international schools, Israel does have a structure of such shared schools and kindergartens. The integrated school, initiated by parents or civil society, exist and receive state funding. However, unlike Northern Ireland, in Israel there is no government support for their unique needs, and they must rely on external donors.

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THE PROCESS OF ENACTING THE NATIONALITY LAW IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL BETWEEN CONSENTS AND OPPONENTS

Hani Abo Reesh

Introduction

The Druze minority inhabited the land of Israel long before the rise of the Israeli state; they resided there since the formation of the Druze religion back in 1017 A.D. When the first Zionist settlements was established across the land, the relationship between the Jews and the Druze started to take shape. This alliance grew stronger, especially with Ben Gurion's declaration of independence in 1948 and the resulting war. Thus, the Druze people sealed their destiny with that of the Jewish people for centuries to come, giving birth to A Pact of Blood (and Life) between the two. This is why the Nationality Bill was received by many frustrated Druze, as a gesture of ingratitude. Therefore, this paper will try to examine the process which led to formation and enactment of the Nationality law, by examining the decision-making process which took place along the way and try to understand the implications which occurred following it.

Literature Review

The identity of the Druze

"Druze-ism" is first and foremost a religion; it began as an independent religion in Egypt in the 11th century A.D. The survival of this group of people through a long history of persecutions and immigrations, was made possible only by sticking to their religion as a core element of their identity, their ideology, social norms and solidarity. Druze in Israel are defined on a religious-ethnic basis. The Druze congregation received recognition as an independent religious entity, entitled to establish its own independent religious institutions.

The Israeli government, by giving judicial autonomy and a legal status to the Druze, has actually granted them authoritative validity for their personal definition of themselves, as well as a separate ethnic category that is distinct from both Arabs and Jews. This independent ethnic recognition explains the cultural and historical will of the Druze, to get a separate status, despite the similarity between the Druze and the rest of the

Israeli Arabs, though this contributes a lot to the political problems that are typical for the Druze[1].

Faraj[2] claimed that the collective identity is crucial to the unity of any company, especially in situations of crisis, in times of social change, and when the boundaries of national identity are not clear enough and the "nation" has not yet reached a cohesive state of concrete national consciousness. The history of the Druze community in the Middle East has been full of crises, changes and designs from various identities. They have not yet reached the stage of designing an identity of national consciousness, nor a democratic awareness in a separate political entity[3].

Faraj[4] notes that there are several factors designing the identity of the Druze congregation. He argues that the official historical research does not have a conclusive and final answer to one of the main factors: their ethnic origin and the ethnic origins of the forefathers of the Druze religion in the 11th century. The Muslim and Christian historians and chronicle writers, who lived in the first seem to address this question. Some of the Western researchers claimed, that Druze were remnant descendants of ethnic groups who lived in the area: Arabs, Persians, Indians, Kurds, Hittites and even Europeans[5]. Today, most Druze believe that they are the descendants of Arab tribes, and no matter whether this is anthropologically correct or not, this "myth" or "fact" has helped in the development of the national Arabic consciousness of the Druze. As a result of this development, the name of the "Mountain of Horan" was renamed in mid-19th century to the “Mountain of Druze”, and back to the “Mounting of Arabs” with the rise of Arab nationalism, along with the renaming of “The Druze revolt” (against the French in 1925) to “The Arab Revolt”[6] [7].

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[1] Camil Aburokhhon, *The Druze Identity in The Israeli Society: Accounts from the Lives of Juniors and the Education of Tradition*, A thesis for doctorate, the faculty of education: University of Haifa., 2006 (Hebrew).

[2] Raja Saaid Faraj, *The Relations between Druze and Jews Until 1948*, Yanouh. 2002 (Hebrew).

[3] Yeushua Amrani, *Between Congregation, Nationality and State*, Chaikin Professor of strategy, university of Haifa. 2010 (Hebrew).

[4] Raja Saaid Faraj, *op. cit.*

[5] Kis Piru, "A pact of life and a pact of blood- The Druze in Israel", in *Teva Hadvarim*, 8, 1995, pp. 64-95.

[6] Raja Saaid Faraj, *op. cit.*

[7] Yosef Hasan, *The Druze, in Between Geography and Society, An Observation from within Haifa*. Chaikin Professor of Geostrategy: Haifa, 2011 (Hebrew).

The issue of their territory is impactful on the consolidation of the national identity of the Druze in the modern era, because they have not been able to maintain the special territory in which they have seen their place, their development, and their future – the mountains of Lebanon. Moreover, the cause of Arabic language and tongue only reinforced the Arab side in their identity. In addition, their social structure is based on clans, which are a new form of Arab tribes. Also, their folklore, arts and material culture are all Arabic by nature[89].

There is a known difference in identity on the ethnological-religious level between the Druze and Arabs, to the point that it is possible to differentiate differences in cultural values between the two, such as: the creation of the universe, reincarnation, the equality between the souls, the constant number of souls in the universe and in new seven tents instead of the five foundations of the Muslim faith. Based on the lack of substantive cultural differences between Arabs and Druze, Lebanese and Syrian Druze were able to integrate into the Arab national movement and be part of its generators and leaders in the modern era, while maintaining a unique religious character altogether[10].

Multiculturalism in Israeli Society

The concept of multiculturalism can be attributed to three elements and aspects that are ideological, structural and demographic. Therefore, in our reference to the State of Israel, it can be argued that the State of Israel is a distinctly multicultural society, due to its multicultural diversity[11]. As for the second element, the ideological aspect, we find in accordance with the definition of Sabar[12] that we are required to first examine the way each society relates to its existing cultural diversity, and according to that it chooses the ways of treating it and dealing with it.

In other words, in a society in which the relations between different cultural groups are based on recognition, mutual respect and symmetry, and from which an equitable practice that respects individual's culture and gives equal place to cultural groups is derived, even at the national level, in

[8] Raja Saaid Faraj, *op. cit.*, Yanouh. 2002 (Hebrew).

[9] Yosef Hasan *op. cit.*, Chaikin Professor of Geostrategy: Haifa, 2011 (Hebrew).

[10] Raja Saaid Faraj, *op. cit.*, Yanouh. 2002 (Hebrew).

[11] Naama Sabar-Ben Yeushua, "Ethnography in Education", in Naama Sabar-Ben Yeushusa (ed.), *Traditions and Movements in Quality Research*, Lod: Dvir, 2001, pp. 101-139.

[12] *Ibid.*, 2001.

this case we can point the existence of ideological multiculturalism, in regards to the third aspect that is related to structures, we are required to examine the way in which the forces and resources are divided among the cultural groups that compose the society[13].

In Israel, there are differences among students that are expressed in aspects such as: Nationality, religion, ethnic origin, geographical location, gender affiliation, seniority in Israel, unique educational needs, etc. In addition, the low educational attainment of students who come from disadvantaged populations such as Arabs and ultra-Orthodox, peripheral residents or children from poor families. In addition, racism, discriminatory prejudice and the lack of tolerance for children and adolescents exist in the education system[14].

The society in Israel is made up of many cultural and ethnic groups, and there is little positive dialogue between them. The multicultural approach will solve social equality issues and it claims that it will help implement the civil, political and social rights of various groups properly in a democratic regime. According to this view, the approach has not yet permeated some social institutions, including the education system. The Israeli social and cultural structure, and the education system, encourages multiculturalist education, so that each sector knows its own culture, and is hardly exposed to the cultures of other sectors. Particular multicultural education focuses on studying one group's culture, while pluralistic multicultural education is intended for all students, exposes them to the discussion of different cultures and raises their tolerance towards the difference in the groups[15].

In addition, multiculturalism in education is an approach that attempts to embed the idea of multicultural basics in society, through the education system. In education towards multiculturalism, different elements were addressed, such as the concept itself, the movement of change and reform and the process. The goal is, that every student regardless of their gender, social status and racial and cultural characteristics, will have an equal chance of attending school. Structural

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[13] *Ibid.*, 2001.

[14] Elizabeth Smolcic & John Katunich, "Teachers crossing borders: A review of the research into cultural immersion field experience for teachers", in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 62, 2017, pp. 47-59.

[15] Yossi Yona & Yehuda Shenhav, *What is Multiculturalism? On the Politics of diversity in Israel*, Tel Aviv: Babel, 2005 (Hebrew).

aspects of schools as well as class differences, disadvantage certain groups of students compared to the others. The purpose of the proposed reform of multicultural education, is to create a change in the education system, so that the different groups in gender or ethnic and cultural affiliation have an equal chance of succeeding in school[16].

Badran[17] emphasized the importance of teaching multicultural education and the contemporary era, and the conflict between Arabs and Jews following the wars should not be ignored, so the prevailing general atmosphere threatens to further undermine Arab-Jewish relations, and this is what raises the importance of teaching multicultural education. The program works to develop intercultural awareness, to provide tools for collaborative work in an intercultural and diverse environment, meeting and getting to know one another. Undoubtedly, the campuses of universities and colleges have the potential to constitute a cross-cultural meeting place between Jews and Arabs, which is the first intercultural meeting, and for many of them the only one[18].

The key to multicultural education, is the help provided for students in and encounter with cross-cultures and encounter with other cultures' symbols and characteristics, will help the individuals to know each other's culture with full recognition and full understanding. Multicultural education is not just an introduction to the other culture, but creating an environment that reflects cultural diversity, and in particular the creation of structural changes, that give expression to cultural differences. Education should be designed to fit every culture and race, and every social group[19].

The identity of the Druze in Israel

It is evident that there is an identity problem among the Druze. This is due to the conflict between their Arab identity, and the great similarity

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[16] Lilach Lev Ari & Walid Mula, ""Us and them": towards intercultural competence among Jewish and Arab graduate students at Israeli colleges of education", *Higher Education*, 74, 2017, pp. 979-996.

[17] Adnan Badran, "New trends in higher education in Jordan 2014", *Education, Economics and Development*, 4th Arab-Turkish Congress of Social Sciences, Amman: Arab Thought Forum, 2014.

[18] Zehavit Gross & Eshan Gamal, "How Muslim Arab-Israeli teachers conceptualize the Israeli-Arab conflict in class", *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 33, 3, 2014, pp. 267-281.

[19] *Ibid.*, 2014.

with the rest of Israeli Arabs on one hand, and on the other, their political-ethnical separation from the Arab-Israeli community, that has been orchestrated by the Israeli government, especially its integration into all official defense forces. This involvement in the Israeli medium (political, lifestyle and otherwise), gave birth to two elements of identity, Druze-Israeli, along with a following third element: Arab. Despite the cultural background and language, the majority of Druze in Israel do not tend to accept the definition that the Druze are politically Arab. Moreover, some believe that there is no Palestinian element interwoven in their identity[20] [21]. Although many point out the positive relations built between the Jews and the Druze, not to mention the latter's service in IDF and their integration into the Israeli mainstream, they nevertheless fear this tendency to be separated and distinguish from other Arabs, which may damage the minority's own traditions, identity and personal lifestyle[22].

In addressing the Druze Community in Israel, I must first refer to the Israeli society, which is by itself a mosaic of ethnic, national, cultural and religious groups. For years, the main policy was aimed at building a fusion center and a one-shaded society. However, in recent years the ethnic-cultural issue has woken up to its fullest extent, standing in the middle of the public discourse. One of the groups in this Israeli mosaic, is of course the Druze society. The Druze in Israel can be seen as a minority within a minority: a religious ethnic minority within the Arab minority, which has chosen or was maneuvered to choose a different way than that of the rest of Israeli Arabs, in everything related to the involvement in state life. This involvement creates a complex and complicated identity[23].

As mentioned earlier, Israel adopted the principle of pluralism in religions, and tried to create a Druze identity on a religious-nationalist basis. It gave the Druze their own institutions, wrote the word "Druze" as a nation on the official I.D. card, and implemented a compulsory law of recruitment. These factors, in addition to the developments in the various areas of life, have led to the creation of two major currents regarding the Druze identity: the first current claiming that Druze are a nationality (in

[20] Salman Falah, *The Druze in the Middle East*, Jerusalem: Ministry of defense, 2000 (Hebrew).
[21] Yosef Hasan, *op. cit.*, Chaikin Professor of Geostrategy: Haifa, 2011 (Hebrew).
[22] *Ibid.*, 2011.
[23] Camil Aburokhhon, *The Druze Identity in The Israeli Society: Accounts from the Lives of Juniors and the Education of Tradition*. A thesis for doctorate, the faculty of education: University of Haifa, 2006 (Hebrew).

other words, a unique religious ethnic group that is distinct from the Arabs), and that they must maintain their unique ethnic identity without any integration. This unique identity is manifested in strong religious identification, and therefore the Druze religion is the basis for formulating the group's ethnic identity. According to this view, the affinity for Arabs may stem only from the common Arabic language, and that it has no national-political component. Put differently, the identity of the Druze is not related to Arab or Palestinian nationalism[24] [25]. From this standpoint, their identity is based on Israeli citizenship, not on Arab nationality. Today, this current is central in the Druze society in Israel. In contrast, the second current is the Arab nationalist one, claiming that the Druze community is but an integral part of Palestinian people, and the Arab nation in general. According to followers of this current, the Druze should not be considered as a separate nation from the Arab world, simply because Arabic is their native tongue. This current is without a doubt a minority in the Israeli Druze society[26].

Fallah[27] states that there are various factors that influenced the existence and conservation of the congregation's identity. The first factor was the religious one, due to the fact that the clerics and sheikhs maintained an isolated lifestyle in the community as a whole for years. The second factor was the patriarchic familial regime, which only strengthened and sharpened the identity of the community. Thirdly, the deep solidarity amongst the Druze as a result of the continuous persecution. Fourthly, a system of social values and ethics that draws its origins from the creed itself, like modesty, truthfulness, courage, hospitality and a strong affinity to the land (one of the three most important fundamental values in Druze society, along with religion and dignity of women). The fifth factor, is the literary sphere: despite the notability of classic Arabic literature in the life of the Druze society, there is a lot of Druze literary works and tales about historical heroes of the creed and legendary religious figures written, since the beginning of the congregation, in addition to stories about the admired lifestyle of clerics. The stories of these heroes still get a lot of attention and public reading on different occasions.

[24] Yeushua Amrani, *op. cit.*

[25] Yosef Hasan, *op. cit.*

[26] Salman Falah, *op. cit.*

[27] *Ibid.*, 2000.

In conclusion, the Druze in Israel constitute a national minority and see themselves as an integral part of the State of Israel. They are undergoing a process of integration in Israeli society. This integration results in social, economic and physical changes, as well as processes of urbanization and modernization of Druze villages on one hand, but also enables them to exert pressure on the Israeli establishment to receive aids and services, on the other hand[28]

Decision-making models: The decision-making process for the nationality law

Decision-making is a process of development for choosing and using it to determine preference among alternative options. Decision making is a very broad issue. There are policy decisions, military, economic and business decisions. Decisions made by managers, heads of state, and military commanders, and there are decisions made by ordinary people. We all make decisions in our lives all the time. Every one of us encounters many decisions in his life. In fact, every day we make decisions about our lives. Seemingly such decisions are simple, but it is interesting to consider some of the factors involved in our decision-making process, even the simplest ones.

The decision-making process of the Nationality Law is spread over three periods. The first period, in 2011, a bill was formulated but it was shelved eventually. At the end of 2014, thegovernment approved two nationality law suggestions, while three Fundamental Law bills were submitted as an alternative to the suggested one All the bills did not come to a vote in the preamble because of the dissolution of the 19th Knesset. At the end of 2015, the Prime Minister established a coalition interior team, to formulate an agreed version of the nationality law. In May 2017, the Nationality Law was approved by the Ministerial Committee on Legislative Affairs, and also passed a preliminary reading in the Knesset. Only in July 2018, the law passed second and third readings and became a Fundamental Law. The law enshrines Jewish national values in the Fundamental Law of the State of Israel, after many have already been enshrined in ordinary laws. The problem created by the law is that to this day, the document defining the character of the state was the Declaration of Independence, with an explicit commitment to grant equal rights to minorities living in the

[28] Yeushua Amrani, *op. cit.*

State of Israel. As mentioned, the Nationality Law ignores the Declaration of Independence does not commit itself to its values, and on the other hand does not define any commitment to equal rights for all minorities living in Israel[29].

The debate concerning the nationality law, raises a heated debate within the Israeli society between those who see it as an important anchor and balance for Israel's national character as the state of the Jewish people against other values already expressed in the Basic Laws, and those who see it as discriminatory legislation that seeks to undermine the democratic nature of Israel[30] (Sherbet Baruch, 2018).

The legislative process

The Nationality Law, as it is referred to in the media and public debate, or in its full name: "Basic Law: Israel - The Nation-State of the Jewish People," seeks to anchor the Jewish identity of the state, its characteristics and symbols. In the 18th Knesset, on August 3, 2011, Knesset members Avi Dichter of the Kadima party and Ze'ev Elkin of the Likud filed the first bill with the initial support of 40 Knesset members of the parties: Kadima, the Jewish House, the National Union, Israel Beitano, the Likud, and the Labor Party. The bill was shelved due to public pressure, and the demand of MK Tzipi Livni, Kadima Party Chairman from MK Avi Dichter, a member of the faction, to repeal it. In January 2013, the elections were held for the 19th Knesset, and although the coalition agreement between the Likud and the Jewish House and Israel Beitano was said to promote the National Law, the law was not promoted until November 2014, due to internal coalition reasons, mainly the disagreement of the chairman of the movement MK Tzipi Livni, and MK Yair Lapid, Chairman of Yish Ateed. In November 2014, the government debated two Nationality Law bills: one drafted by MK Elkin, and the other drafted by Knesset members Yariv Levin and Ayelet Shaked. After a heated debate, the government approved the two bills, considering the opposition from 6 ministers (5 ministers of Yish Ateed and Tzipi Livni; Limor Livnat was absent from the vote). Following the government's approval, three private

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29 The Israeli Democracy Institute, "Nation-State Law Explainer“, 2018, https://en.idi.org.il/articles/24241, consulted on 11/02/21.

30 Hezki Baruch, "'Nationality law will not be changed'", 2018, https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/250039, consulted on 11/02/21.

bills were submitted by the parties: Htnoaa, Yish Ateed and Hadash. These basic bills tried to present an alternative to the basic definition of the State of Israel, and each proposal dealt with another key element that was missing from the coalition's Nationality Law bills. All the bills (including that of the government) did not reach a pre-vote vote, because of the dissolution of the 19th Knesset and the elections.

The elections for the 20th Knesset were held in March 17, 2015, followed by the 34th government of the State of Israel, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu. In October 2015, Prime Minister Netanyahu decided not to discuss MK Avi Dichter's private bill - which was scheduled to be voted on by the Ministerial Legislative Committee - and promised to enact government legislation on this issue. In November 2015, the Prime Minister established an intra-coalition team to formulate an agreed version of the Nationality Law, with the intention of reaching agreement by the coalition parties. On 7.5.17, theNationality Law was approved by the Ministerial Committee on Legislative Affairs, and three days later, on 10.5.17, the Nationality Law was passed in a preliminary reading (voting) in the Knesset. The discussions for a second and third reading in the Knesset were held by a special committee, that was established for the purpose of discussing the law, which is in fact the merger between the Knesset Committee and the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee (hereinafter "the Joint Committee"). The Joint Committee convened and held 20 hearings between July 26, 2017 and July 18, 2018, during which it discussed controversial sections of this law for many hours.

The governmental debate following the nationality law

The Nationality Law anchors Israel's status as the nation-state of the Jewish people, and it is controversial because it confers constitutional value on Jewish identity, but does not commit to key democratic values, such as equality and minority rights, contrary to the Declaration of Independence and the laws of other nation states in the world. In addition to the central and principled debate regarding the need for nationality law, and the world view it presents (especially on issues of equality, democracy, and minority rights), the heated public debate on the law revolved in detail on four issues: the status of Jewish law, the status of Arabic language, the relationship with Diaspora Jewry, and the issue of the separate community settlement, and the right of every person to preserve his or her heritage. The Knesset committees' discussion, by nature, revolved around various

sections that appeared in the government bill. On the basis of a review of the minutes of the Knesset Joint Committee debates, the following are the topics of discussion and the main items of law around which the debate focused.

In the Israeli Knesset, the Arab and Druze ministers tried a number of times to insert changes into the law, in order to, as they put it, "correct an injustice which is being done to the Druze population in the state of Israel"[31]. The main argument of the Druze population and the Druze leaders in the Israel society was, that the nationality law as it is, does not cement the legal status of the Druze as citizens of the state of Israel. As a result, the Druze leaders demanded on the Knesset floor for the law to be changed, in order for such a clarification be made and that the status of the Druze people be set as equal citizens. According to Knesset member Hammed Amar of the Druze community, Prime minister Netanyahu promised the Druze that the law will be changed within 45 days, to include a definition of the legal status of Druze, but when those days have passed, no changes have been made to the law.

According to Knesset member Tzipi Livni, the state of Israel and the Israeli government, the nationality law "forgets" the Druze population, as it neglects to give them legal stand, despite the fact that many of the Druze population in Israel are former soldiers in the Israeli Defense force and many of them are families who have lost family members in the wars. To that, Knesset member Ahmed Tibbi added that the law removes the word "Democratic" from the definition of the state of Israel, which is defined by the nationality law as a democratic state for the Jewish people. In addition, Tibbi defines this democracy as an "Ethnic democracy", meaning that it treats only a part of the citizens in a democratic way[32].

Conclusion

The nationality law has undergone a significant public debate, on the way to being approved by the Israeli Knesset. The biggest opponents were the Druze population and the Druze leaders in the community and in

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[31] According to official transcripts from the Knesset meeting, No. 391. Dated 19/12/2018. Retrieved from http://online.knesset.gov.il/app#/player/peplayer.aspx?ProtocolID=79514, 13/02/21.

[32] According to official transcripts from the Knesset meeting, No. 360. Dated 08/08/2018. Retrieved from http://online.knesset.gov.il/app#/player/peplayer.aspx?ProtocolID=76169, 13/02/21.

government, since their main claim was that this law is discriminating against the Druze population, in particular.

Despite this public outcry, which has gone on for several years, the law finally passed in the Knesset and not Only did it pass as a state law, it passed as a Fundamental Law, which means that if and when the Israeli government will form a constitution, this law will be one of the first ones which will be written in that constitution as a basic value of life in the country. There is no wonder that the Druze community feel abandoned by the government in light of the nationality law. While a large majority of the Druze population joins the army, fights and donates its time in service of the country, the state in return basically tells them that they are not perceived as class-A citizens. Given all of that, we have to ask ourselves: what went wrong in the decision-making process? Unfortunately, this paper cannot answer this questions sufficiently, without talking to the people who were in charge and took part of the process itself, so we are left only with the possibility to speculate, based on available information, that the decision-makers in the Israeli government do, in fact consider the Druze population as second-class citizens and therefore, not qualified or eligible for a legal, binding status of citizens in the state of Israel.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND CENTRAL AUTHORITY ON SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN ISRAEL

Guy Damary

Introduction

Political and social changes over the years have influenced the governance of small and medium-sized enterprises. The use of the term neoliberalism first appeared in Germany following World War I. It was used by scholars at the Freiburg School to describe their plans for reviving classical liberalism. The development of neoliberalism was fueled by neoliberal ideals that envisioned "the 'self-regulating market' as the main engine powering the individual's rational pursuit of wealth"[1]. The State of Israel, which was established in 1948, initially maintained a developmental economy. However, over the course of a few decades, the economy was transformed into a neoliberal political economy[2]. Faced with the challenges of dealing with a debt crises and rampant inflation in the mid-1980s, Israel's neoliberal turn caused a shift in policy, changing from policies involving direct intervention and centralization to policies focusing on deregulation, liberalization and privatization. The transformation from a centralized economy in Israel into an economy based on neoliberal values was led by economists in the state agencies in Israel who realized the benefit in the development of high-tech industries and other innovative enterprises[3].

In the past few decades, social movements, technological advances and economic changes in the wake of capitalism have caused a collapse of public policies, which have become ill adapted to the changing situation, but have not yet been substituted by adaptable approaches suitable to innovations. The adoption of a decentralized approach has focused on strengthening the local authority providing an opportunity for the local community to empower themselves and create mechanisms for dealing

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[1] Steger, & Roy, 2010, p. 2
[2] Maron, 2019
[3] Krampf, 2018

with their local issues[4]. The aim of this study was to examine the influence of the local authorities and central authority on small and medium-sized enterprises in Israel. The small and medium-sized enterprises in the local community maintain an important role in connecting the residents to a local space in their neighborhoods and towns. Despite increasing globalization that affects all aspects of the community, the small and medium-sized enterprises remain the backbone of the local community. Thus, this study addresses the following research question: *How do the local authorities and the central authority influence small and medium-sized enterprises in Israel?*

Governance Structures

The functioning of governance structures and the delegation of authority at different levels have impacted entrepreneurship activity. It could be expected that good governance would correlate with the fostering of entrepreneurship activity. Through the creation of political stability and an increase in the trust of citizens in their government, a corresponding increase in the willingness of the citizens to invest in and start a new enterprise is attained[5]. In the European Union, for example, there has been a connection between the changes to governance structures and the development of governance models and the development and growth of entrepreneurship in the region[6]. The strength of the support for entrepreneurial activities has been dependent on the extent of policy adoption and program implementation across all levels of authority.

The Shift to Neoliberalism

In the 1970s, the lack of economic growth was attributed to strict government regulation of the economy. During this period, inflation rates were high, public spending was excessive and governments imposed high tariffs on international trade. Over the past few decades there has been a shift in global economies towards neoliberalism, with a liberalization of trade and a deregulation of the economy, so that by the 1990s, neoliberalism had been recognized as the most significant economic paradigm. The neoliberals introduced an economic model which was based

[4] Carrera, Brugué, Casademont, & Serra, 2019
[5] Friedman, 2011
[6] European Commission, 2018

on free markets and free trade, and that was further adapted to the social context. The shift to neoliberalism also drove the increasing privatization of state-owned enterprises, limiting state involvement. Friedrich von Hayek, a leading economist, and a Nobel prize winner for his study of neoclassical economics, suggested that innovation and knowledge generation would stem from a free market open to self-regulation[1]. Steger and Roy[1] related to three different aspects of neoliberalism, and described neoliberalism as an ideology, neoliberalism as a mode of governance and neoliberalism as a policy package. Governance based on neoliberalism allows for the central authority to be replaced by smaller local authorities which adopt a more liberal type of governance. The local authorities enable greater self-regulation of enterprises within a free market[1].

Neoliberalism in Israel

In the early years following the establishment of the State of Israel, Israel maintained a developmental economy. The transformation of the economy into a neoliberal political economy occurred over the next few decades[2]. The Israeli economy experienced crises of debt and rampant inflation. Policy changes during the 1980s enabled a shift from centralization and direct intervention to more liberal policies of deregulation and privatization. The shift was supported by state agencies who realized the value in establishing innovative enterprises and high-tech industries[3]. Such state agencies, like the Bank of Israel and the Ministry of Finance promoted neoliberalism and viewed it as an opportunity to increase their autonomy, while weakening the very large enterprises[7] By the 1990s, the state agents had introduced several neoliberal policy actions, which included the privatization of enterprises, in addition to enforcing regulations with a goal of reducing budget deficits and controlling the rampant inflation[2].

Policies for the Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Israel

In contrast to the large enterprises, small and medium-sized enterprises as described on 6 May 2003 by the Committee of the Regions, in Article 2.1 of the Annex to the Commission Recommendation are those enterprises which employ less than 250 employees. In addition, financially, the small and medium-sized enterprises should generate an annual turnover that does not exceed €50 million and/or an annual balance sheet

[7] Maron, & Shalev, 2017

total that does not exceed €43 million[8]. In Israel, the Ministry of Economy and Industry is the state agency that develop the policies for directing SMEs and supporting entrepreneurship in Israel. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Economy and Industry, the Small and Medium Business Agency (SMBA) was established in 2010 to promote entrepreneurship in Israel. The Small and Medium Business Agency publishes annual reports that address the challenges and obstacles that SMEs in Israel face. The Small and Medium Business Agency also runs a network of MAOF business development centers to increase access to finance for the small and medium-sized enterprises and organizes professional management training programs for the enterprises[9]. The SMBA published their third annual report in 2015 which showed that small and medium-sized business owners made up 99% of the Israeli business owners. In the report, the SMBA also indicated several bureaucratic and regulatory challenges that SMEs in Israel faced. As compared to the European Union, Israel had limited regulatory impact assessment. Furthermore, differences existed between the level of "business user-friendliness" amongst the local authorities in Israel[10].

In 2015, the SMBA also published an index that reflected the regulation of local authorities. They included in the index fifty of the local authorities with the largest number of licensed SMEs. The index related to three components. These components included the satisfaction of SMEs from activities of local authorities, the accessibility to regulatory requirements and payment options of the local authority and an indication of municipal tax rates. The aggregated score of the local authority indicated a direct correlation between the socioeconomic level of the local authority and the satisfaction from the functioning of the local authority. The SMBA also included in the report a study of the state of regulation of the central authority. Recommendations were provided for improving legislation processes. These improvements included more active involvement of the public in the development of policies. It also supported the importance of transparency of the processes that affect policy changes[14].

Another indication of the policies affecting small and medium-sized enterprises in Israel was provided by The Organization for Economic Co-

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[8] De Man, Munters, & Marx, A., 2016

[9] Small and Medium Business Agency, 2018

[10] Ministry of Economy and Industry, 2015

operation and Development (OECD). Since its founding in 1961, the OECD has worked to promote global economic progress. In its report published in 2016, the OECD related to Israel's efforts in supporting SMEs and entrepreneurship[11]. The report detailed a difference in growth between technology-based SMEs and traditional SMEs. Policies targeting technology-based SMEs had encouraged research and development and the development of high-level skills, while enabling venture capital for the development of the technology-based SMEs. By comparison, traditional SMEs demonstrated low rates of growth and productivity and were unable to mirror the success of their technology-based counterparts. Thus, the report contained recommendations for a more equal distribution of support amongst all SMEs, which could include the development of workforce skills, focused entrepreneurship education and greater access to credit. These actions should be accompanied by national SME and entrepreneurship policy strategy for stimulating entrepreneurship[15].

The current state of governance in Israel depicts the global shift towards decentralization, where centralized policies are being replaced by greater power afforded to the local authorities. An understanding of the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises to the functioning of a city or region has brought into focus the need to develop policies for supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in the area. According to the findings reported by the OECD, technology-based SMEs in Israel have displayed greater growth and higher rates of productivity that the traditional SMEs, possibly due to the focusing of support on the technology-based SMEs[15]. In this study, the influence that the central authority and the local authority have on small and medium-sized enterprises in Israel will be examined as perceived from the perspective of the small and medium-sized enterprises.

Methodology

The study involved qualitative research which was conducted to examine the perceived influence that the central authority and the local authorities have on the small and medium-sized enterprises. Interviews were conducted with ten individuals involved in small and medium-sized enterprises in the cities and regions of Israel, including the heads of the authorities and the small and medium-sized enterprise owners. The

[11] OECD, 2016

participants took part in semi-structured interviews, providing their responses to open-ended questions that guided the conversation. The one-on-one interviews enabled the participant to express their views openly about the topic being studied. The responses of the participants were recorded and then underwent content analysis. The analysis of the participants' responses provided insight into the impact that the central authority and the local authorities have on the small and medium-sized enterprises.

Results

During the one-on-one interviews that were conducted, the participants were asked to share their thoughts about how the authorities could better support small and medium-sized enterprises. In response to the question *How do you think small and medium-sized enterprises can be helped by the local authority and central authority?* the participants acknowledged the important influence that the local authorities and central authorities may have on small and medium-sized enterprises and their ability to influence the successful functioning of the small and medium-sized enterprises. Although the local authority has a direct impact on small and medium-sized enterprises, the local authorities in Israel are highly dependent on central authorities for the budget allocation needed to support small and medium-sized enterprises. The budgetary allowance enables businesses to establish different administrations, affects the adjustment of the *Arnona* (local municipal tax) and impacts the differential budgeting for small and medium-sized enterprise complexes. In the current situation in Israel, the support for small and medium-sized enterprises is perceived as limited with a minimal number of administrations helping the medium-sized enterprises in a given region. Along with increased support for small and medium-sized enterprises, the participants expressed a need for the easing of the regulations and the bureaucracy involved in the setting up of small and medium-sized enterprises and in their functioning. As expressed by interview participant 7 "Create a partnership rather than a list of requirements . . . create encouragement and growth rather than regulation and enforcement".

The participants were asked the question, *What do you think are the difficulties that small and medium-sized enterprises face?* Interview participant 1 related to "*High Taxation, and bureaucracy*". Most small and medium-sized enterprise owners who open small businesses do so on their own, carrying

out most of the work independently, without a thorough knowledge of the regulations and procedures necessary for establishing a business. These small and medium-sized enterprises often fall between the cracks and pay a price for their lack of knowledge, especially when compared to the large chain stores who are supported by legal guidance familiar with dealing with the bureaucracy.

To understand the political aspects that effect small and medium-sized enterprises, participants were asked to respond to the question, *What do you think are the political effects of small and medium-sized enterprises?* From the responses of the participants it became evident that the influence of the small and medium-sized enterprises on the city is significant. The small local businesses contribute a significant share of the local municipal taxes. In addition, the small and medium-sized enterprises form an integral part of the inner-city landscape. Yet, the participants did not perceive the local authorities as investing enough in maintaining and upgrading the city centers, and often ignored the redevelopment needed in the older areas of the city. As explained by interview participant 4, "the commercial areas are very neglected".

The participants were also asked the question, *What do you think are the expectations from the local authority regarding political aspects relating to small and medium-sized enterprises?* to solicit insight into the participants' view about the local authority. The participants' expectations from the local authority include assistance in dealing with the economic and political aspects that relate to their small and medium-sized enterprises. The participants expected an easing of the bureaucracy on the part of the local authorities and a decrease in the level of regulation to ease the establishing and running of and medium-sized enterprises in the city. Furthermore, the assistance required by the small and medium-sized enterprises as perceived by the business entrepreneurs includes help in preventing the small and medium-sized enterprises from falling through the cracks and then paying indirectly the price for this oversight later. The participants suggested establishing business administrations that could assist the and medium-sized enterprises and support them through the various bureaucratic processes and with their help to simplify the process of opening the businesses. In addition, interview participant 6 mentioned, "Local buying, encouraging business, promoting business areas" as the expectations of the participants from the local authorities to encourage and support their enterprises.

The participants had expectations from the central authority for dealing with the economic and political aspects that relate to their small and medium-sized enterprises, in addition to those expectations they had from the local authority. Thus, during the interview, the participants were asked, *What do you think are the expectations from the central authority regarding political aspects relating to small and medium-sized enterprises?* The demands from the central authority were of a similar nature to the demands the small and medium-sized enterprises had from the local authorities. Nevertheless, since the central authority maintains a strong economic control over the local authorities and contributes significantly economically, the participants had additional expectations from the central authority. One of these expectations was that the participants expected a lowering of taxation to support the small and medium-sized enterprises that form the basis of the local economy.

Based on the content analysis of the interviews, differences exist in the perceptions of the participants that participated in the study in Israel about the possible contribution of the central authority in the political arena that could be beneficial for small and medium-sized enterprises. While the participants had expectations from the central authorities, the participants were divided about the central authorities' impact on small and medium-sized enterprises. Several participants argued for full cooperation between the central authority and the heads of the local authorities, regardless of political affiliations, for the benefit of the small and medium-sized enterprises. As interview participant 9 claimed, there was a need for "full cooperation with the mayors". Other participants viewed the situation differently and did not perceive the central authority as making any contribution to support the small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, they did not perceive the central authority as having any direct influence on the small and medium-sized enterprises. Unlike many of the other topics, the responses of the participants showed disagreement regarding the role of the central authority in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises. Thus, while several business entrepreneurs that participated in the interviews argued for greater cooperation between local authorities and central authority to support small and medium-sized enterprises, others contended that the influence of the central authority on small and medium-sized enterprises is likely to remain minimal.

Summary

Small and medium-sized enterprises have the potential to drive a country's economic growth and the economic development of cities and regions. The small and medium-sized enterprise owners make up 99% of the Israeli business owners. They play a significant role in creating employment opportunities for the owners of the small and medium-sized enterprises, their families and often even provide employment opportunities to the locals[9]. A study was conducted to examine the influence that the local authorities and central authority have on the small and medium-sized enterprises in Israel. While the small and medium-sized enterprises are the basis of the local economy in many cities and regions in Israel, the small and medium-sized enterprises are struggling in many respects.

These struggles include bureaucratic obstacles and regulatory hurdles that exist which the small and medium-sized enterprises need to overcome when establishing their businesses and during the daily functioning of the enterprises. These obstacles are in alignment with the findings from the SMBA's third annual report from 2015 that highlighted the bureaucratic and regulatory challenges that small and medium-sized enterprises in Israel faced[12].

The small and medium-sized enterprises mostly do not appear to have the knowledge or capability to handle the challenges they are facing, yet the perception is that they are generally afforded little support from the authorities. While larger enterprises may enlist the help of lawyers and consultants, the small and medium-sized enterprises often face the bureaucratic challenges alone and deal with them to the best of their ability. In the report published by the OECD, the OECD distinguished between the different levels of support that the technology-based SMEs and traditional SMEs in Israel had received. The high levels of support for the technology-based SMEs, in the form of boosting research and development, assistance with the development of high-level skills, and enabling the input of venture capital for their development of the technology-based SMEs had driven the growth of the technology-based SMEs, while the traditional SMEs with lower levels of support had displayed reduced rates of growth and productivity[15]. With a lack of substantial support, the struggling small and medium-sized enterprises in the city may be forced to shut down, causing a chain effect of businesses

closing and relocating to other centers and regions, with a resulting negative effect on the city center.

Following the move from centralization to the adoption of a decentralized approach to governance in Israel over the years, the small and medium-sized enterprises would have appeared to have a greater potential to influence financial and political aspects within the city. However, in the current situation, the small and medium-sized enterprises remain highly dependent on the local authorities, despite the adoption of the decentralized approach which should have enabled the local community to empower themselves to deal with local issues[4]. Although the expectation of the small and medium-sized enterprises was to receive assistance and support from the local authorities, the local authorities themselves are dependent on the budgetary allocations that the central authority passes on to the local authorities. The small and medium-sized enterprises had expectations that the local authorities would be able to make changes to the regulations and bureaucracy involving small and medium-sized enterprises which could facilitate the establishing and managing of the small and medium-sized enterprises in the cities.

The perception existed amongst several of the participants that the central authority did not have any direct influence on the small and medium-sized enterprises and that the support provided by the central authority for the small and medium-sized enterprises was limited. Overall, the current economic situation of many small and medium-sized enterprises in Israel is challenging and a need remains to alleviate the bureaucratic obstacles that restrict the functioning of the small and medium-sized enterprises in the cities. Furthermore, the participant expressed a need to increase the cooperation between the small and medium-sized enterprises and the local authorities and between the small and medium-sized enterprises and the central authority to improve the situation of the small and medium-sized enterprises in the cities.

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